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FEATURE STORY

THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE

BY

CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

Read GEORGE GILBERT'S STORY, "THE KING COBRA MYSTERY," in Our Next Issue

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THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE

A FASCINATING MYSTERY STORY

By CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEDIUM'S THREAT

At the door of the star dressing-room, behind the scenes at the Globe Theater, a stage-hand knocked loudly.

"Come in!" a hearty voice called from within, and, as the stage-hand turned the knob and pushed back the door, he found Gordon LeMar, the celebrated conjurer and illusionist, just completing his make-up before the mirror. The magician gazed inquiringly at the reflection of the stage-hand in the glass.

"Mr. LeMar," faltered the man, "the princess lady—the blonde one in No. 10—asks you to come there right away."

The eyes of the magician were troubled for a moment, and he stared a little uncertainly at his uncouth visitor.

"You mean to say," responded LeMar slowly, as if he were repeating a most unusual thing, "that Miss Rose wants me to come to her dressing-room? Is there anything wrong?"

"I—I am afraid there is, sir."

LeMar was on his feet in an instant.

"What is it?" he demanded, and there was more than casual concern in his tone.

"I'm afraid the princess lady doesn't feel very well," answered the stage-hand diffidently.

Without replying, LeMar brushed past him and strode to the stage. Outside the curtain he could hear the musicians testing the strings of their instruments, and the excited buzz of a large and growing audience. With no

ear, however, for these usual sounds, LeMar hurried across the stage, already completely set for the evening's first part, and arrived finally at the door of a dressing-room, on the panel of which the figure "10" was painted in black, bold characters. At this he rapped quietly.

Instantly the door opened, and the face of a beautiful girl gazed out at him. She was one of those rare blonde creatures, with blue eyes that seemed always dreaming and pouting, lips that seemed formed just for ardent kisses. But now her face was drawn and pale; in her eyes there was a strained, haunted look, like an animal that hopes to hide from its enemies, and beneath her long lashes there lurked the gleaming traces of her tears.

The sight of the girl's grief was evidently a great surprise to Gordon LeMar.

"Rose!" he cried. "What has caused this?"

Ignoring his question, the girl, clasping her hands together and holding them out to him in moving anguish, almost groaned the words:

"Do I have to go on to-night, Mr. LeMar?"

LeMar took her hands in his own. He was surprised to feel how cold her fingers were, and his heart was touched at the helpless way they closed about his own powerful hands.

"You mean you don't feel well enough for the performance?" he inquired gently.

She bowed her head.

"Just that!" she murmured.

"But, Rose!" he protested soberly. "Isn't this just a bit of stage fright? Isn't it your nerves, more than anything else? I realize, little girl, that this is your first night before a real audience. And I know what that means. I know how tired you must be, after all these rehearsals. Breaking in a new show is always a job, and when it's your first, I know how badly you must feel. But cheer up! Take a little ammonia to steady your nerves—the first plunge and it's all over. Just like a cold bath."

His tone had turned from gentle kindness to kindly bantering, and he was smiling at her hopefully. But she raised her head then, and he saw that his effort had failed. The look in her eyes, too, told him why. She was in mortal terror. She was trembling and her mouth was parted, her breath coming forth in quick, startled gasps. In dumb suffering she looked at him piteously.

"Rose!" he cried, alarmed. "I will get you a doctor!"

But with unexpected strength in the fingers which still were twined about his hands, she drew him back, and with a struggle conquered her emotion for the moment.

"It isn't that!" she protested. "I'm not afraid of them—out there! I can't tell you what I am afraid of, Mr. LeMar. I am just a foolish girl. I suppose you are right, after all. A girl's nerves! Aren't they foolish things to have? Hurry up, now, Mr. LeMar. They've made the last call; there goes the orchestra now!"

Even as she spoke there was a crash from the musicians' pit and, with a mighty blare of trumpets and blowing of brass, the lively overture, with which LeMar insisted his performance begin, was on in full swing.

The rush and gay swing of it seemed to enthuse the Princess Rose.

"Who could resist such magic music?" she said bravely, and her wan little smile went straight to the young sorcerer's heart. "Never mind, Mr. LeMar. I just felt ill for the moment. I am sorry I disturbed you. Finish putting those funny little touches on your eyebrows, and straighten your tie when you get it on. You know your tie always slips when you produce those bird cages from the shawl. I'll be there when the curtain goes up, and——"

She paused, and into her eyes the old frightened look came back again. LeMar saw it and wondered. In his mind a hundred wild schemes had been whirling, by any one of which he sought to readjust his magical entertainment so that Princess Rose might not be needed. But he knew how useless such a thing was. Either she went on, or the performance would be a failure, because the principal illusions had been built around her. LeMar intended taking on an understudy, but had not done so. Now, as he watched her, his heart sank again; for her cheeks were actually blanching beneath her rouge, and her head was tilted to one side as if she heard something which filled her with dread.

LeMar listened, and he heard as well. It was a peculiar, wooden sound, that tapped imperiously above the waltzing strains of the orchestra; that rapped imperiously, as if it would not be denied; that came nearer and nearer to them as they harkened. It was right behind them, LeMar suddenly realized, and he turned quickly.

He saw a strange pair of human beings approaching him. By what means they had passed the tightly guarded stage-door he could not then surmise; for what purpose they had set out after him he could not guess, but the settled look of determination upon their wrinkled faces told him they were come to him on no trivial mission. One was an old man, white-bearded, whose tapping cane had first apprised them that visitors were at hand. The other was a yellowed old woman, whose face had lost all semblance of life, looking more like a crinkled old Chinese manuscript, except for her marvelous eyes. They were like two burning white coals, and from the moment LeMar turned to look, those penetrating, unfriendly eyes were turned full upon him in a weird sort of stare that disturbed him.

As if bidden by some influence outside himself, LeMar turned to see how these two affected the girl, in whose physical condition at that moment he was deeply interested. To his infinite relief he saw that her face was no longer frightened, and that she gazed with some tokens of curiosity, though with some apprehension, at this strange old couple.

Two feet away from the magician the withered old man and his decrepit companion halted. The old man raised his stick and pointed it at LeMar's knees.

"Are you LeMar?" the old man asked, in a harsh, snarling tone that proclaimed at once his errand was not for good.

"I am LeMar," replied the magician, with just a trace of asperity in his voice.

"Then I've come to talk business to you," the old man spat out viciously. "I'm here on important business with you, Mr. LeMar. You've got to talk business to me, and that's all. So——"

LeMar made a step forward and gazed sternly at the unpleasant old man.

"Whatever business you have with me, sir," he answered coldly, "will have to be at another time, and by appointment. That curtain will rise in about ten minutes, and I shall be quite busy for the next three hours. So I shall have to ask you to arrange to see me at another time."

The old man pounded his cane furiously on the floor and shook his head with dotard malice.

"That curtain don't go up until you settle with me," was his ultimatum, and he squared himself before the magician in spirited opposition. The old woman beside him let out a hectic little chuckle, glanced amusedly up at the flies, and relapsed into nonentity.

"My business don't take more than *five* minutes," the old man continued, "but them five minutes is important, and don't you forget it! Now, will you listen to me?"

LeMar was on the point of ordering the couple fror

the stage, but a second thought restrained him. After all, their mission might be a very simple one. Possibly they had some fancied claim on him and wanted passes to see the show. Possibly they were beggars. Like every other man or woman behind the footlights, LeMar was superstitious, especially about his opening nights. Here he was, opening an entirely new show in a large city, and he meant to take no chances with his luck. With a quick smile toward Rose Kellar, the girl behind him, he spoke again to the old man, this time in a more conciliatory tone.

"If you will state your business quickly, I will listen to you for three minutes," he said. "After that, you will have to leave the stage, as we have to make ready for the performance."

"Three minutes is long enough for me," the old man wheezed, lifting his stick again, as if he didn't know whether he should strike the magician or wait a while. "All you've got to do is answer my questions. Do you stand by all the show pictures you've pasted up around this town?"

"My playbills tell the truth, I hope," replied LeMar with a whimsical little smile. "I will confess, however, that all those pictures of little devils whispering in my ear and smoke arising from skulls is largely the imagination of the artist."

The old man blinked at him slowly before continuing.

"I'm not so Jerusalem sure of *that!*" he observed with a knowing shake of his head. "Not so *Jerusalem* sure, now. Well, how 'bout them notices that you're going to expose the mediums? How about them, hey? Do you still stand by them?"

"Most assuredly," answered LeMar with dawning wonder. "I have no quarrel with the psychologists who believe in spiritualism—such men as Professor Hyslop, Sir William Crookes, and the others—and I respect the faith of those who hold it as their religion. But I have a big quarrel, old man, with the crooks and the thieves who prey upon the most sacred emotions of the gullible who become their dupes; who prostitute the beautiful art of conjuring, and who pass off the feats of a magician as real phenomena and get money for it! They are the crooks! Those are the gentry I expose during my performance!"

"Who gave you the right to decide what's true and what's false?" demanded the old man.

"I haven't time to discuss that with you now," replied LeMar shortly. "I must beg you to excuse me."

"You leave the mediums alone!" the old man snarled, "and we'll leave you alone. But you trouble us, and see what happens. That's all. You better cut out that part of your show to-night, Mr. Lemar."

Again the old woman turned her burning eyes from LeMar's face and cast them in silent imprecation to the top of the theater. She grinned at LeMar with a feline malice which startled him.

"Good-evening," the magician said angrily. "Don't make it necessary for me to enforce that hint."

The old couple were turning slowly, when the old man suddenly paused and lifted his stick again. This time he pointed it at Rose Kellar, still in the doorway.

"Don't you be no party of it, gal!" he said, threatening. "Take a tip from a medium—and look out for the man with the scar on his left cheek!"

At this both, old and withered though they were, shook with croaking amusement. Then they slowly picked their way past wires and bolts in the floor, past towering scenery, to the shadows that lay before the door to the street. With a puzzled air LeMar turned to Princess Rose.

She was reeling. In her eyes the old horror had come back. But now their glance rested on the bent backs and feeble forms that were moving away from her, to the accompaniment of that inevitable tapping of the old man's cane. She clutched at the knob, as if to steady herself, and a convulsive shudder writhed her body. Then, with set teeth, she mastered herself.

She turned a wan face but a courageous smile to the magician.

"I'll be ready!" she whispered, and the door closed upon her. With a heart strangely weighted down with only half-understood forebodings, the magician hurried back to his dressing-room.

As he sat down to finish his toilet he heard the tapping of the old medium's cane on the flagstones outside.

CHAPTER TWO

AN UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE THING

FIVE minutes after the big gray door at the stage entrance of the Globe Theater had closed on the shriveled pair of ancients who had intruded themselves on Gordon LeMar, the curtain rose on the opening performance of the magician's new entertainment. It had been designed to create a sensation with the public, and it certainly made a profound impression on these "first nighters."

As the curtain soared groaning to the roof, the darkened stage was illuminated with quick, sharp flashes of lightning, while rumbling thunder and howling winds made the blackness fearsome. The intermittent gleams of light over the stage revealed a singular business. There was a huge caldron, suspended from a tripod, in the center of the stage. Beneath, a dull fire, and steam poured from it in great, ghost-like clouds. Around the caldron trooped three weird old women, while every second or so the audience caught glimpses of hideous faces in the vapor. All about were rushing storm clouds and the flying creatures of night and storm.

To the imaginative, it was truly a Black Art festival, such as one reads of in old story-books. But suddenly there came a change. There was a piercing scream as one of the old witches raised her broom. A blinding flash of light followed, and instantly caldron, fire, smoke, witches, evil faces and the darkness with them vanished into nothingness. There was the stage, brilliantly illuminated, laden with the glittering tables, the gorgeous draperies, and the beautiful apparatus of the necromancer. At even paces across the stage were the assistants, ready for the approach of the wizard. The purple hangings at the rear were seized by a lovely girl, whom many in the audience recognized from the playbills as the Princess Rose. Laughingly she drew back the curtains and Gordon LeMar stepped forward.

In his hand was the small black wand, carried as a conventional custom for a thousand years by magicians. He was in evening dress; his poise was perfect and his smile engaging as he stepped to the center of the stage and bowed.

"We will begin the evening's entertainment," he announced, "with the Silk Worm's Dream."

From the orchestra pit a low, mysterious melody stole out as LeMar began his work. He had that deftness, that grace and ease about his movements, the ready smile and the winning glance that made his art wholly distinctive from his weaker contemporaries and imitators. As the spectators watched they saw him produce great handfuls of radiantly tinted silk handkerchiefs. They

seemed to grow beneath his fingers like magical bouquets, until the stage was covered with them. All the while that mysterious melody glided with him as he worked as if a phantom were dancing beside him. And as he passed on to the production of the flowers, and then the manipulation of playing-cards and the exhibition of the chosen cards that rose like butterflies from the decks and floated over the heads of the spectators, the audience was simply transported with delight. For LeMar had an elusive personal charm to which it is hard to give a name, but by which he managed to create a real Arabian Nights atmosphere over the house. It was to be a night of miracles and, with settled satisfaction, the audience sat back and watched.

At his gayest, LeMar worked on through his new and fascinating program. He produced pigeons from a net while standing in the audience; he cut off the heads of a duck and rooster, and in replacing them got the duck head on the rooster's body and the rooster's on the protesting, writhing neck of the duck, to the huge delight of the juvenile element in the audience. He caught fish at the end of a line he tossed over the heads of the bald-heads in the front row; he vanished a famous bronze lamp which was said to have come from a heathen temple in Benares, and finally, as a climax, he approached the *pièce de résistance* of the first part, and, in the opinion of veteran magicians, of all magical entertainments, the Levitation of Princess Rose.

With a rather serious look upon his face LeMar stepped somewhat closer to the footlights than was his wont and slightly held up his hand. A deep hush fell over the throng as the lights gradually were dimmed, and a mysterious crimson glow bathed the stage. There, in the silence and the strange twilight of the stage, LeMar began to explain to them how it was a favorite feat of the Hindus, especially the Yogis and the Mahatmas, to make bodies to remain suspended in the air without support, as a proof of their highly developed spiritual powers. In this connection he related some personal experiences he had encountered during three years he spent in India.

Then LeMar announced solemnly that he was prepared to duplicate the chief feat of the Hindu holy man. He promised to levitate the body of his assistant, until it would remain floating in the air, without visible means of support. He would pass an examined hoop around her body, and if a physician in the audience, or even two physicians, cared to come upon the stage and feel her pulse during the period of her suspension, they would be welcome. In conclusion, LeMar insisted that absolute quiet must prevail during the presentation of the illusion.

"I must ask you not to make a sound," he said, slowly but firmly. "Any sudden sound, any unexpected noise might result in serious consequences for the young lady."

Of course, LeMar was only acting; he was heightening and making realistic the scene, and he worked upon the fancy of the audience until many actually feared for the safety of the girl who was thus to be lifted up before their eyes. LeMar turned to the left wings.

From one of them now stepped a lovely vision. Attired in baggy Persian trousers of white satin, with flowing bodice of green, and wide, drooping sleeves, a girl stepped forward, her face turned toward the enchanter. But it was impossible to catch a glimpse of her face. It was covered, as is the fashion of Oriental damsels, and her lids drooped over her eyes. Her manner was timid, as if the very glance of the magician filled her with fear. This was all clever acting, over which LeMar and Rose Kellar had spent many hours in careful rehearsal.

He approached her now and took one of her hands in his. It was hot; so burning, indeed, that LeMar was startled. He wondered if she were suffering from a fever, and he inwardly determined to close the show after this evening until she was well enough to go on again, or until an understudy who could take her place could be secured. Meanwhile the illusion proceeded.

Passing his hand in fantastic circles over her face, LeMar pretended to be sending her into an hypnotic trance. She tottered and swayed backward. Frightened gasps came from nervous spectators, but before she had fallen to the floor an attendant rushed forward and caught her. This was all part of the *mise en scène*, intended to heighten the interest of the audience.

They placed her on a low couch, sat in front of an Oriental background, amid soft lights that added a touch of Eastern beauty to every new moment of surprise. Standing behind her, the magician renewed the passes and slowly a miracle came to pass.

With a slow, easy movement that seemed to be of another plane, of another sort of world, the body of the girl was lifted in a lying position. It rose higher and higher, perfectly rigid all the while. It moved neither to the right nor left; it did not shake, or bend or sway. As inevitable as fate itself it went up slowly through the air, until it was high over the conjurer's head. He stood regarding it with a fixed awe that already had communicated itself to those watching the scene.

With a grave air LeMar stepped again to the center of the stage.

"There," he said softly, "the young lady rests comfortably in the air. She might remain there for hours, for as far as she is concerned she is practically dead to the world. I shall now pass this hoop around her body, and then cause her to descend to the couch, after which I will restore her to consciousness."

While the orchestra breathed out fitfully the strange, sad music of the East, LeMar passed the solid hoop about the form of the sleeping girl; then he caused the body slowly to descend, until again it was resting easily on the divan. He clapped his hands vigorously, but it was only after considerable effort that the girl's form stirred, and she rose doubtfully.

It had been magnificently done. The girl had acted so cleverly that the people were genuinely glad to see her safe and normal again. They clapped and cheered, and the little princess bowed in repeated acknowledgment.

It was here that something utterly impossible occurred.

So insistent were the curtain calls, that LeMar, thinking it a gracious thing to do, lifted the Persian veil quickly from the face of his assistant. He did it so quickly she could not prevent him.

Then he stepped back with a hoarse gasp of astonishment.

The girl was not Rose Kellar at all. It was the face of a girl he had never seen before in his life.

CHAPTER THREE

A LADY OF SILENCE

FORTUNATELY, the audience did not guess the situation.

All those in the front of the house saw before them was the finish of a perfect bit of artistic deception; the climax of a marvelous illusion. The wistful, uncertain air of the girl and the startled manner of LeMar all seemed to fit into the picture.

As the curtain dropped on the tableau, no one in the crowd had understood that they had witnessed a greater

marvel than they had bargained for. Men climbed over their feminine neighbors in the seats and gathered in little knots in the lobby and smoking-rooms, there assuring each other that the effect had been produced by "wires" or "mirrors" or any other of the scores of methods which occur to the mind of the uninitiated. To not one did it occur as remarkable that the girl, as she was revealed when her veil was lifted, had not appeared previously during the entertainment. It is unlikely that any of them had noticed that she was not the same laughing Princess Rose who had given such a gay, buoyant touch to the earlier mystifications. This girl who had been caused to rise in the air was of the same size and build as the girl they had first seen, and such is the fallibility of human observation and the prevalence of human laziness that it is practically certain that not one knew the difference.

Therefore, they had no conception of the tense situation on which the curtain had really descended.

So soon as his body was hidden from the eyes of the audience, LeMar placed his hands on the shoulders of the strange woman and demanded:

"Who are you? And where is Miss Kellar?"

She looked very awe-stricken and frightened, but she said not a word. So wrought up was LeMar that he shook her, almost roughly, and his voice was angry as he repeated his question.

"Answer me!" he commanded. "Who are you? There is something radically wrong here! Who are you, I say?"

She put a finger to her lips and then to her ears, signifying by distressed little signals that she could neither speak nor hear. It was a dilemma. With a helpless little gasp LeMar glanced about him at the knot of wondering assistants who looked upon this newcomer with genuine amazement.

Just then another figure stepped into the picture. It was Jack Brown, the dapper, sporty young business manager of the show, and Gordon LeMar's best friend under the stars. Brown's face was dripping with perspiration, as if he had come on a mad run from the box-office to the stage.

"Great Jericho cats!" he exploded. "I saw it from the back of the house. What in hip-hip-hooray has happened, Gordon?"

LeMar turned a thoroughly puzzled face toward his excited chum.

"I don't know anything more than you do," he answered, "except that Rose—er, Miss Kellar—was taken ill just before the curtain rose. She at first wanted to stay out, and then decided to go on. All went well, until she—at least I thought it was she—came on in costume for the levitation. But when I lifted the veil it was this girl, and she has indicated to us that she's deaf and dumb!"

"Good-night in the morning!" Jack Brown exploded again. "Where in jumping Juniper did she *come* from? And how did she know what to do in the show?"

Gordon LeMar shook his head impatiently.

"The big question to me, first," he declared, "is where is Rose Kellar, and what has happened to her?"

Roy Carey, one of LeMar's most trusted assistants, stepped forward respectfully and touched his hat.

"I went to her door, Mr. LeMar," he said, "and knocked. And I didn't get no answer. So I tried the door and it was unlocked, and so then I looked in. Miss Rose ain't there!"

LeMar and Brown stared at each other, and then, as if by the same impulse, they turned to the girl who had impersonated the missing Princess Rose.

"She knows," said Brown, half under his breath. "She knows, all right. We've got to make her talk somehow."

LeMar had been pounding his right fist into the left palm in an absent-minded fashion, but now he suddenly straightened up as if he had come to a decision.

"Come here, all of you!" he said quietly, addressing his assistants. With a subdued air hovering over them, as if a tragedy had occurred, they gathered around him. His face was serious enough to impress even the lightest-minded among them.

"Miss Kellar has been missed," continued LeMar seriously. "We don't know where she is. She may have left the building. I want you to scatter and look in every room for her. And, Roy, send the doorman to me. I will be in my dressing-room. Come, Jack!"

The magician placed his hand on the arm of the strange girl in the gorgeous, barbaric Eastern attire. He indicated to her that he desired her to follow him. In her eyes, as she looked up at him, there was an appealing sort of childishness, a trusting confidence, that struck a responsive chord in the troubled enchanter's breast.

"Wherever this girl came from, Jack," he said, as they walked across the stage, "I believe she is an honest girl and a good girl!"

"Be careful!" warned the business manager, who suspected everybody, and who, it was hazarded by some, would not have believed implicitly in his own grandmother. "She may be just shamming, you know. She might have good ears, after all!"

If the girl, however, had overheard these words, she gave no token. As one who walks in a dream, she trod the thick, green velvet that overlaid the stage and stopped as if a little frightened at LeMar's dressing-room door. With a bow Lemar stepped aside to allow her to pass. At this evidence of courtesy she was plainly abashed and blushed furiously. They both saw the blood mantling beneath her artistically treated cheeks.

Inside the cramped little room—the Globe Theater was built a long time ago, and its dressing-rooms are the bane of all who play there—LeMar offered her a chair. Jack Brown climbed on top of a wardrobe trunk and lighted a cigarette. LeMar faced the girl, who had not spoken.

"If you are bluffing about your speech and hearing, you can't keep it up long," said LeMar sternly. "You know that. You're too sensible a girl to expect to keep up such a deception and get away with it. You're bound to betray yourself, Miss—what's your name?"

He shot the last question at her with disconcerting suddenness. Jack Brown, from his perch not far from the ceiling, gazed admiringly at this little evidence of LeMar's skill in handling a difficult situation.

But he gained nought by it. The girl stared up at him throughout all his speech with a tired little air about her, but it seemed evident she did not hear a word. Not by the slightest sign did she betray her secret, if she were shamming. There was not a flicker of the eyelids, a tremor of the lines at the mouth, to show that she had been startled by that unexpected question LeMar had literally hurled at her. She sat placid, pretty, impossible.

Then LeMar had an inspiration. Reaching to the table shelf, he found a pencil and a small pad. He wrote on the top sheet, in plain, bold letters:

"Who are you?"

He passed the pad to the girl. She received it with an abstracted sort of air and gazed upon it without apparent interest. Then she looked up into LeMar's face again and slowly shook her head. The pad dropped from her fingers to the floor.

"She means she can't read, by Juniper!" cried Jack Brown, with a surprised little whistle. "Gee, but that's tough luck, Gordon. What in the name of sacred mackerel are you going to do about it?"

The question seemed to arouse the magician, who had

passed his hands wearily across his eyes, as if utterly astounded and bewildered. Now he was rigid, erect, with much of his old assurance.

"The first thing to do is to dismiss this audience at once," he decided.

Jack brown landed on the floor in a heap.

"What!" he cried. "Dismiss that perfectly good audience and ruin our whole season, right when you're cleaning up? Where's your nerve, man? If this girl could do the 'levi' she can do the rest of the show, and I don't care a Mohammedan damn where and how she learned to do it. Come on. Get ready for your second part."

But LeMar had already sent a boy scurrying out through the private boxes for the house manager.

"The audience will be dismissed at once," he reiterated decidedly. "The fact is that a girl has disappeared. While we are finishing the performance, heaven knows what may be happening to her. We've got to get busy and find her now. All my life, Jack Brown, I've looked for mysteries, and never could find them. I had to make my own mysteries to invent illusions for my performance. Three years I spent in India, and not a thing did they show me but some childish toys for tricks. I've prayed for a baffling mystery, and here it is. And I'm going to solve it!"

"Then you're going to be a detective?" queried Jack Brown, with a queer little smile.

"I'm going to be a detective," defied LeMar, "until Rose Kellar is found!"

"Then I'll be your Watson, Sherlock!" cried Jack Brown, and the two men clasped hands.

They were still clasping hands when the house manager opened the door. He saw a strange sight. There were two men shaking hands, and beside them, in a chair, a girl in costume, fast asleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE SETS TO WORK

LEMAR did not waste time making long explanations to the house manager.

"There has been an accident, Mr. Ford," he said quickly. "I will thank you to make a little announcement to the audience. Say to them that the money will be returned at the box-office immediately. Mr. Brown will see you later and adjust the matter."

"But, Mr. Le——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ford. Our own business just now is urgent."

With a face helplessly, almost comically, bewildered, the fat little house manager backed out of the room. As the door was closing upon him, he managed to venture one question.

"Is the engagement closed?" he asked.

"That depends entirely upon circumstances," replied LeMar.

He stepped over beside the strange girl, who now sat back limply in her chair, her head drooping, her eyes closed. Jack Brown held her wrist, with a serious, professional air that at any other time would have aroused the magician's amusement, for Jack knew nothing whatever of the pulse and its indications.

"She has fainted!" he announced, with the air of an oracle.

LeMar shook his head in decided disagreement.

"I do not believe she has fainted," he said. "Her manner was far too collected for her to be seized with a fainting spell so suddenly. Moreover, her hands are warm. She is not in a faint."

"Then she is sleeping," declared Jack.

"She is not sleeping. It is contrary to all human experience for a girl to go to sleep under such extraordinary circumstances."

Jack Brown clapped his hands together emphatically and retorted:

"Yes, Gordon, my boy, so it is. But it is also contrary to human experience for a beautiful girl assistant suddenly to disappear, and another girl, almost as pretty, but self-confessedly deaf and dumb, to appear in her place. It is contrary to all human experience for such a girl to be able to perform so exactly the difficult part of the princess in your levitation illusion. There are other things about this affair that are contrary to human experience, therefore, why shouldn't she do another contrary thing and go to sleep?"

In reply LeMar lifted the girl's eyelids, so that the staring eyeballs were revealed. The distorted face jarred somehow on the debonair business manager.

"Look at her," insisted LeMar. "Note the breathing; observe that she does not stir, now that I throw back her eyelids and stroke her forehead, which is damp. If she were sleeping, this would disturb her. She would stir restlessly; she possibly would awaken. But she does not mind. No! This is not the sleep of one entirely exhausted. People who have been working under a long, terrible strain may sometimes fall asleep, even in such a trying situation as this. But this is not one of the times."

"Then what has happened to her?" asked Jack in awe-struck tones.

"It is very plain. She has been drugged or hypnotized."

Jack Brown stared at the conjurer with unbelieving eyes. He looked at the girl again, and then his eyes traveled back to the set, stern, but anxious face of LeMar. The business manager whistled long and softly.

"Jumping Hali—holy smoke!" he ejaculated. "What does all this mean?"

"That's just it, Jack," answered LeMar. "That's what we've got to find out. We've got to know what all this means. I wish you would tell them to hurry the doorman in."

A few moments later the guardian of the Globe Theater's stage entrance was trying to answer LeMar's questions, and still stare at the beautiful figure of the unconscious girl in the chair at his side. The examination gave LeMar no information whatever. The doorman was impressively honest when he stated that he had not left his post since seven-thirty that evening; that in that time Miss Rose had certainly not passed him, and that the only two strangers who had gained admission were an aged couple, a man and woman, the former of whom had carried a cane.

"Who were they?" demanded Jack Brown eagerly.

LeMar interrupted to tell him what he understood about this old couple, and that he would explain it when they had more time, as he did not consider it important to the problem in which they were engaged.

"One thing I would like to know, however," continued LeMar, again addressing the doorman. "On what pretext did that old man and woman get by you and get on the stage?"

The doorman's reply was unhesitating.

"They told me you were expecting them," he answered glibly. "They said they had urgent business with you."

"I see," said LeMar thoughtfully. He looked the doorman squarely in the eye for a moment, but the latter bore his gaze without flinching. Then the magician put a final question.

"Did you refuse admittance to any one at the stage-

door to-night? That is, did any one else try to get behind the scenes?" he asked.

The doorman scratched his head, as if that were a powerful incentive to the processes of memory.

"There was a man come there," he finally recollected, "and gave me a note which he said was meant for the leading lady—the one who figured in all your tricks."

LeMar and Jack Brown exchanged quick, significant glances.

"Did you deliver the note?" inquired LeMar.

"Yes, sir. It was just about five minutes after the lady got here. She got awful white as she saw the writing."

LeMar got up and put a heavy hand on the man's shoulder.

"How do you make that out? How do you know, when you never left the stage-door, and she had been in her dressing-room five minutes?" LeMar demanded.

This poser did not disturb the impromptu witness to any appreciable degree. He grinned a little and admitted that he *had* left the door long enough to deliver the note. On further prodding he also admitted that he had received a dollar bill for doing so.

"What kind of a man was your generous friend?" asked LeMar with just the suggestion of a snarl in his voice. Inwardly he was raging, and ready to shake the fellow before him. "What sort of looking man was he?"

The doorman's answer struck a sudden chill to his heart.

"He was a tall man," he replied. "A very big man, with a long slash of a scar on his right cheek!"

LeMar saw a strange pair of human beings approaching him. One was a white-bearded old man; the other was a yellowed old woman.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCTOR NECK AND HIS SISTER

PRINCESS ROSE was not in the Globe Theater.

When LeMar had dismissed the doorman, and gathered the reports of those whom he had despatched to search the house, he learned to his bitter discouragement that there was not a sign of her in the building, and that she had not returned to the apartment hotel she had been quartered in for the last ten days.

Having thus exhausted every immediate means at disposal, he at once began operations on a line of campaign which was sketching itself subconsciously during the last half an hour.

While he was receiving the reports of Carey and the others of his organization, he sent Jack Brown to the telephone, and in a short time an ambulance drove up the alley in the rear of the theater. There was a door at the back, through which the scenery was carried to the stage from drays. This door was now opened, and the lovely silent and slumbering girl was carried in Jack Brown's arms to the stretcher in the ambulance. Presently LeMar joined his business manager, and the two climbed into the conveyance.

The ambulance driver immediately started up.

As they passed down the avenue on which the Globe Theater fronted and speeded northward to a private sanitarium with which LeMar was familiar, the magician began to unfold his plan of attack.

"To understand what I have in mind," he began, "you must know all that I know."

Here the young conjurer related all that had transpired during the half-hour immediately preceding the rise of the curtain, little more than an hour before. He gave an impressive recital of the brief but startling interview with the old medium and his companion; of the terror that he had noticed on the face of Rose Kellar, when the old man had lifted his cane and told her to beware of the man with the scar on his cheek.

"Jerusalem cats!" exploded Jack, when he heard this. "The doorman said a man with a——"

"Exactly! That is why I am trying to get to work at once. I am going to place this girl where she will be under the most careful observation, and where, at the same time, she will receive the most careful medical attention. We can return to her later, for, however exasperating her coma, her deafness and her lack of speech may be, she will nevertheless be a valuable clue, and there will be some means by which we can use that clue. Meanwhile, as soon as we are certain that she has been taken care of, we will hunt up that abominable old man and his wife and have it out with them."

Jack was tapping the toe of his shoe with his light little cane.

"What are their names?" he asked, almost abstractedly.

LeMar's heart sank at the question. Suddenly a new phase of his predicament dawned upon him. The old man and woman had not sent in any cards, neither had they been announced. They had not given him their names, or any clue to their identity. How, in a city of a million, was he to reach out and find them?

The light of a street lamp, as they passed it, revealed his troubled face to Jack Brown, and when the latter asked if there was anything especially wrong, LeMar confessed that he was balked at the start.

"Go on!" derided Jack. "You're kidding me. You're a fine magician-detective if you can't do better than that."

As a matter of fact LeMar had already done better. Facing the immediate problem of establishing the names and addresses of his singular visitors, he decided on a plan almost before his doubts had left his lips. As the idea flashed across his mind, the ambulance stopped at the entrance of the Hillman Sanitarium, and the still senseless girl was carried up the broad stone steps and into the quietly lighted hall. A nurse and an orderly in white stepped forward.

LeMar and Jack met the superintendent, Doctor Wild, to whom they communicated a modified version of their difficulties. They did not tell him all that had occurred, but related enough for him to understand the necessity of discretion, and the careful watching which they wished the queer patient to receive. Before leaving the hospital they had the satisfaction of having the interested physician's promise of all that they asked. Being something of a psychologist, the doctor was intensely interested in what they had told him, and they felt assured he would serve them well.

Down the parked street they walked on leaving the place in complete silence. The usually irrepressible Jack Brown seemed to understand that his friend wanted to be quiet, and did not attempt conversation. At a garishly illuminated drug-store at the corner they halted, and LeMar went inside. Jack Brown saw him enter a telephone booth and deposit a nickel. He could not help wondering who the magician was calling.

But he was more than surprised when LeMar emerged soon afterward, smiling a little triumphantly, and announced that he had found what he sought.

"The lady and gentleman," he said sarcastically, "whom we are seeking live at 247 Willow Grove avenue, and their names are Doctor Ezekiah and Sister Rebecca Neck respectively. At least that's what the police told me when I described the pair."

"How far are they from here?" asked Jack, with an eye to the windward for a taxi.

"Just around the corner," answered LeMar jauntily. "We're in luck!"

At a fast clip the two adventurers turned the corner of Willow Grove avenue and began studying the dimly revealed numbers over the vestibules. It was a difficult business deciphering the half-faded gilt figures, but after a few moments they found they had another block to traverse before they reached their destination. This last block they covered almost at breakneck walking.

They found No. 247 Willow Grove avenue without much difficulty. Indeed, it could hardly be missed. It had evidently been built a great while ago, when the surrounding neighborhood was not then a suburb. It was a frame affair, rather shaky in the knees, decrepit, ugly and faded, much like Doctor Ezekiah and Sister Neck respectively. There was a forgotten garden in front of it, and a drunken paling fence in doddering guard of the premises. On the gate was a sign, which the two men bent low to read.

"YOUR PAST, YOUR PRESENT AND YOUR FUTURE—ASK SISTER NECK. SHE TELLS."

Such was the legend of the faded signboard. They thrust back the gate and mounted the shaky, rotting steps. All around was darkness. There was no sign of life, no glimmer of light, no noise of moving things in that silent, menacing, eerie old house. One might almost fancy it to be a gathering-place of ghosts, among whom Doctor Neck and his chuckling sister might well take an honored place.

LeMar knocked at the door, and the sounds of the knocking ran trembling and echoing through the rooms and corridors behind it. He pounded again and again, rattled the knob and shook the shutters. The knob came off in his hand, and one of the shutters collapsed. They half expected to see the two gnarled old figures standing at the window when the shutter fell. But only a black and barren mass of shadows was there.

Then they heard a step behind them and turned quickly. A little girl was looking at them inquisitively.

"Be you lookin' for the Necks?" she asked boldly.

They both nodded, and a silver coin glittered in LeMar's hand.

"They're gone!" the child answered, grabbing at the coin. "They took suit-cases and left about—oh, just a little while ago. They told my mother they was going for good, and they didn't say where they was goin', neither."

CHAPTER SIX

A SINGULAR PLEA

IF ever he felt baffled, hopeless, defeated, LeMar felt it in that moment.

The one clue on which he had depended for some enlightenment, the sole tangible thing given to work on, had suddenly eluded him. As quickly, as silently, as mysteriously as the spirits with which they affected to commune, old Doctor Neck and his ugly sister had vanished. The sighing night wind seemed to carry on its crest the low, diabolical chuckle of old Sister Neck, taunting the anxious magician and his friend.

Meanwhile, the child, grabbing at the dime which LeMar had offered her, was eager to be off, but Jack Brown, with unusual thoughtfulness, stayed her. Smiling with the winsome way that made Jack such a likable fellow, and always endeared him to children, he asked where she lived.

"Right down the street," the little girl answered readily. "No. 6 Willow Grove avenue, three doors from the corner, right in front of the lamp-post, and the number's on the door. Me father's name's O'Brien; he works for the city."

In spite of their worry and concern LeMar and Brown smiled together at her free, friendly chatter.

"Never mind, Miss O'Brien," answered LeMar. "We have no immediate need for your personal biography, but we might want to make some inquiries later along other lines. We are real estate agents, and we wanted to talk about the property. Thank you very much!"

With a mischievous smile the little wisp of humanity who had given them such startling and disturbing intelligence darted away in the gloom. There, on the rickety steps of the deserted house of the mediums, LeMar faced his business manager with a face that betrayed his anxiety.

"It's a mess, Jack, old man," he said sternly. "Rose Kellar has been stolen from us. A strange girl has taken her place, and now she is unconscious. And the only sensible clue that I have been able to pick up has completely eluded me. I don't see where I can make another move."

There was a world of sympathy in Jack Brown's eyes, but not a solitary gleam of inspiration to aid in the crisis they now faced. He would like to help, but not being of the resourceful type, he was hopelessly baffled. He knew he would merely blunder and make matters worse if he tried to suggest anything. So he sensibly kept quiet, as he had done on many another occasion, and allowed LeMar to think in silence. He felt sure LeMar would think of a plan. And that was exactly what the tall, hawk-faced mystic was trying to do.

In fact, the magician stood there on the steps in silent absorption so long that Jack began to worry. He feared they would attract the attention of passers-by, and that they might find themselves surrounded by a curious neighborhood crowd. Before this happened, however, LeMar came back to himself with a sudden little exclamation, as if a decision had been reached in his mind.

"The thing is simply this, Jack," he resumed. "These mediums have almost confessed their complicity, if not their actual guilt, by their actual flight. They had a motive, understand, for kidnaping that girl. They knew it would halt my performance, and the very object of their visit was to do that thing, in self-protection. They have fled and taken Rose with them for revenge. But I think I have hit on another clue."

Jack was all earnestness and attention.

"The very mention of a man with a scar on his cheek was sufficient to bring terror into Rose Kellar's face," went on the conjurer. "Now, these mediums knew about him, evidently knew the effect the mention of his name would create, and warned the girl against him in my presence. I believe, Jack, old man, we might look for that man with the red scar among the mediums!"

It did seem feasible. At least, it offered some prospect for action, some hope of getting somewhere. And indeed the situation needed action. The deadly silence all about the disappearance was already having its effect, and both men longed for something tangible. Either one of them would have welcomed a set-to with a gang of desperate ruffians, in order to rescue Rose Kellar. But the irritating fact that the girl was gone, and the mediums gone, and that they had no way in which to track either one of them, was becoming oppressive. So Jack Brown hailed this new theory with delight. They would try to find a medium with a scar on his left cheek.

LeMar, once his mind was made up, always got to work immediately, whatever the nature of the task.

"We will walk from here to police headquarters," he decided. "It is only a matter of a few blocks or so. When we get there, we will telephone the Hillman Sanitarium and find out if our strange lady friend, who is deaf and dumb and unconscious, has had anything else overtake her in our absence. Then we'll put this thing squarely up to the detectives, this question about the medium with the scar on his face, without telling him why we want to find out. I don't want to make a public scandal of this by reporting it to the police until I have to. Before I go, though, Jack, I would like to take another look around these premises."

Mounting again the shaking steps, LeMar stepped across to the shutters and tried them. They were locked, though he felt sure if he had exerted his strength he could easily have torn them bodily from their rusty, ancient hinges.

Next, being of a neat and orderly nature, LeMar picked up the fallen handle of the door and carefully replaced it on the end of the iron rod which projected through the opening. Almost mechanically he turned the knob and, to his utter surprise, the door gave beneath the pressure of his hand.

"Jack!" he called softly. "This door is open!"

The *blasé* young manager did not appear startled at the information.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Simply this," answered LeMar impatiently. "I tried this door not fifteen minutes ago, and *it was locked then.*"

Jack Brown was at his side in an instant.

"Come on, Gordon!" he cried. "Let's go in and find the spooks!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

MARKED "PERSONAL"

IN another moment the magician and his manager had pushed back the door. They found themselves in a narrow, dark hallway, smelling vilely of musty carpets, dust and stale onions, mingled with another and peculiar odor which they could not give a name to, but which was more penetrating than all the others put together. Moreover, they were in total darkness.

Neither had a means of defense, and neither had any doubt that the old people who had dwelt in this ramshackle old barn, while not physically dangerous themselves, would not hesitate at any means to strike back at their enemies. And they regarded Gordon LeMar and all his kind as their worst foes. Therefore they went forward with considerable caution.

Feeling in pocket after pocket, LeMar at last found his matches and struck a light. The flaring little flame gave them but a feeble illumination, but by its light they managed to get some idea of their bearings.

Evidently the place was meanly if not miserably finished, and there were evidences of very hasty departure, such as tumbled-over boxes and knocked-down wearing apparel. Before the light went out they had found the door of the parlor to the right, and through this they passed, LeMar meanwhile striking another match.

The parlor plainly had been the room in which the

seances at fifty cents a head for the faithful had been held. There were old-fashioned kitchen chairs arranged in rows, with a sort of platform and table at the farther end. Here Sister Neck had been wont to get her psychic impressions and pass them on to her dupes. Gordon LeMar, who was keenly interested in the scientific side of spiritualism, and who believed in all genuine phenomena, could not help sighing at the empty trumpery and shallow trickery here indicated. He felt the deeper convinced that Doctor Neck had acted desperately, but has acted to save himself and his kind of fakirs.

The most profound stillness prevailed throughout the house—a hollow silence so hauntingly eerie that the two men, when they did speak, conversed in whispers. It was almost as if they were hushed in the presence of the dead. But they feared more practical things than ghosts. Both of them felt there might be enemies lurking in the shadow, and were ready for a fight, if one should come.

But they were not molested. They passed through the dining-room into the damp and ill-smelling kitchen, but found no one. LeMar opened the kitchen door and peered into the small back yard, piled high with rubbish and junk of every description, on which the moon gazed disconsolately. A black cat scurried across the fence and disappeared down the alley shadows. Rats darted in and out, with frightened, angry little squeals. LeMar shut the door and, lighting another match, peered about him.

A door, across from him, opened on a steep stairway that led up to the rear of the second floor. Determined to find if any one were eluding him, to place his hands on any friends of the Necks, if they still remained in their queer place, LeMar led the way up these dark, narrow stairs, with Jack Brown following in stolid silence. Arrived at the head of the stairs, they stopped and listened intently.

In such a situation it is strange how one fancies things. The slightest noise takes on a sudden and momentous significance. Small, cracking noises in the wall that ordinarily possess no significance at all assumed a new meaning. LeMar could hear his own heartbeats; he could hear the tiniest sounds, and Jack Brown's hearing was extraordinarily acute.

"Jack!"

LeMar's mouth was at the ear of his friend; the name had been spoken so carefully, in so low a tone, that it was like the ghost of a whisper. Jack answered in a voice almost equally difficult to detect, if there were any near to listen. Then LeMar spoke again, slowly, distinctly, so that not a word would be lost. It was a moment of crisis that had come suddenly, but they were meeting it well.

"I fancied I heard the chuckle of old Sister Neck just now. It seemed almost at my elbow!"

A revulsion of feeling came over Jack Brown. The remark struck him as utterly absurd, preposterous—almost superstitious. The thing was not within reason. How could that old woman be anywhere about? Had not they been seen to depart by the neighbors? The impatient young business manager could not altogether control his feelings.

"Don't throw a scare into me like that again!" he whispered, with less caution. "Jerusalem cats! You know that old hag isn't anywhere near here. Cut it out, Gordon; this thing is getting on your nerves!"

The magician again came closer with his lips to the ear of his friend.

"I heard it again!" he murmured, and there was a challenging note in that soft, delicately spoken sentence. "I tell you, old Sister Neck or some one else is near by. I know."

Some sharp reply was hanging on the tongue of Jack Brown, but it was never spoken. Before he could open his mouth something clammy and cold, with a cool little breeze around it, rushed by his face. He darted back, with the chills racing down his spine. Then he heard a stifled exclamation from Gordon LeMar.

"Catch it!" shouted LeMar. "Get it quick. Don't let it get away. Where's your matches. Jack?"

Desperately, in an agony of suspense, Jack Brown fumbled with his matches, shaking hands dropping matches as he tried to light them. Then a little flicker spluttered up in front of him and he saw the angular figure of the magician holding aloft a match.

"She's gone!" cried LeMar, and his voice was like a groan. "She's gone!"

The match was flickering low, and he lit another, moving it about and trying to pierce the inky darkness with its tiny glow.

"What happened?" blurted out Jack.

"A cold hand touched my wrist," replied LeMar, as if he were relating some common-place thing. His voice sounded dazed, as if he had passed through some horrible experience, and was not yet quite certain as to what had actually happened. "Then it pressed something into my hand. It was this!"

He held up a small, white envelope, from which a perfume exhaled—a faint, delicious aroma. They bent low over it as LeMar lit his last match.

It was addressed to "Mr. Gordon LeMar," and in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope was marked "Personal."

"Do you know who wrote that?" asked Jack.

"I do," was the magician's astonishing response. "I have seen the handwriting many times. This note is from Rose Kellar!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN UNFINISHED SENTENCE

SHOCKED and amazed, and not free from the eerie suggestion of this place, the two friends came closer together in the darkness. They braced themselves for whatever the gloom might hold. Moment after moment they waited.

Out in the street they could hear noisy children shouting nursery rhymes. The distant roar of the elevated came to their ears, and every now and then the hoarse warning of automobile horns. All these sounds of ordinary city life gave an extraordinary accent to the strange situation in which they found themselves. It was the haunted silence of the house all the more sinister; it made the darkness about them the more menacing, the uncertainty all the more unbearable.

But as time crawled on there was no further sign. There was not even the sound of a mouse scrambling behind the wall paper, nor the flapping of a shutter. All was quiet; as fearfully quiet as a specter tormented tomb. It was a creepy, crawling kind of stillness; the silence that breaks the nerves of strong men.

Its effect was soon manifest upon LeMar and Jack Brown. With one accord they rushed forward into the dark bedroom at the end of the hall. They dashed to the windows, threw up the curtains and the windows, and thrust out the shutters. The light of the swinging arc lamps of the street flooded the place.

Certainly, save for themselves, this room was empty. The illumination was ample to show them the old-fashioned wooden bed, with its heaped-up coverlets, as if it had only recently been slept in; the time-shaken chairs, and the antique black walnut bureau with the marble trimmings in the corner under the gas-jet. The curious Jack was making a quick exploration, and presently he gave a triumphant little chortle, as he held something aloft in his hand.

"Matches!" he exulted. "I've found a box of 'em!"

It was but the work of a moment for him to light the gas and still farther brighten the sleeping chamber that had evidently belonged to Sister Neck, of occult reputation. They saw in its ill-kept appearance, its dust, its carelessly thrown old garments in the corners, and the all-pervading air of carelessness and dirt a true portrait of the character of the old woman with the diabolic chuckle.

There was not much time, then, however, for them to make an examination of the domestic habits of the Neck family. Some one, or something, had been under this roof with them, had given them physical, tangible evidence of its presence, not five minutes before. Whoever or whatever it had been, most certainly its activities concerned them vitally; motive was evident in the note which had been thrust into LeMar's hand, and it behooved them to act with all decision and despatch.

"Shall we read the note, or go on searching?" asked Jack.

LeMar's actions were all the reply that was needed. He thrust the note into his wallet and placed it again in his pocket. Then he strode toward a cupboard door that was standing just a little ajar. He drew this back quickly, but faced nothing but a job lot collection of clothing left behind in the hurried departure of Sister Neck. Jack, meanwhile, was lending all his aid, though all the things he did could not be described as of the highest importance In solving the case on which they were bent. He looked under the bed, which was practical; but he also drew out all the bureau drawers and poked around in every sort of odd corner, moving with the greatest haste and enjoying every minute of it.

The net result of this, and a subsequent investigation of every nook and cranny in the house, was a complete failure.

They threw caution to the winds. They lighted every gas-jet in the house to aid them in their search; they explored the cellar, they prowled around in the rubbish of the backyard, they tried to find some means of egress to the roof, in order to account for the escape of the person or creature who had left that note in LeMar's hand.

"I'm beginning to believe it was a real ghost!" said Jack, with a gleam of superstition in his eyes. Jack was from Irish stock, and there was a vein of the dread of unknown things in him, inherited direct from his Celtic forbearers.

LeMar gave an impatient little snort in reply.

"Nonsense!" he declared. "It merely confirms the fact that old man Neck and his sister are implicated in this thing, and that Rose Kellar is in their clutches. Perhaps the note may tell us something. Certainly, there's no use looking around in this house any more—I'll swear there's no one in here now."

Removing the note from his wallet, LeMar broke the seal and drew forth a small sheet of paper, folded once. Standing beneath the old chandelier, lighted now, probably for the first time in many years, LeMar spread it out, as Jack Brown bent over his shoulder eagerly.

This is what they read:

"My Dear Friend: You are making a dreadful mistake. The old man and his sister have not harmed me. They have had nothing to do with my disappearance from the theater this evening. You are on the wrong track, and the best service you can do me, as a kind, good and sincere friend, is to drop your personal investigation of the matter at once. Dear Mr. LeMar, you will never see me again. The little Princess Rose, who was to be the disappearing lady in your illusions, has really vanished at last. You must not hope, you must not try to call her back. It is wiser for her to go. There are so many things I wish I could explain to you, but I can't. It's all so hard. Try to forget all about me, you good man. The little girl who took my place can serve you well. She will be very valuable to you. Just try her and see. Good-by. The best of everything should be yours. R. K.

"P. S. Because I know that we shall never meet again, there are two truths I can safely say to you. One is that I know, for I am a woman and I am not blind, you are in love with me. The other is that I love you. It may be that——"

And there, as if the hand of the writer had been seized, the writing ended in an abrupt, sudden jerk. There was nothing to suggest what the thought of that unfinished sentence might have been

CHAPTER NINE

ONE GLIMPSE OF TERROR

INTO the eyes of each other they gazed, those two warm, true friends. And each read a true, plain story. LeMar was suffering, but he was glad in his pain. And as he looked at his friend, the worldly, careless, always jesting and often shallow man of the world, the magician saw the comradeship that best expresses itself in inarticulate sympathy. At such a time there was not a word Jack Brown could have uttered that would have been as eloquent as the unspoken message of his eyes, the tender reassurance of his hand resting on LeMar's shoulder.

The magician folded the note again, replaced it in its envelope, and tucked the missive away in his pocketbook. Then he cleared his throat, as if it were not easy to speak.

"Come on, Jack!" he said.

"Where?" asked the business manager, with genuine curiosity in his voice.

"Home!" answered the magician laconically.

That was a stunner for Jack.

"Home!" he repeated in indignant ejaculation. "Holy skipping mackerel, what are you going home for? Are you ready to give up as soon as this?"

The intention of this was obvious, but altogether unnecessary. It did not draw the fire from LeMar that Jack had expected.

"We can do nothing here," responded the magician, "and the more I think of the police plan the less I like it. I want to keep away from the police. I want to avoid publicity, scandal, pictures in the paper, and the rest of it. Besides, I want to win out on this thing myself. I have made up my mind to solve this mystery, and that note has only strengthened my determination. I believe in the quiet of our room we can think better. We can do nothing here now that I can think of. We must examine into this thing and map out our plans well. So we're going home."

By home LeMar meant the hotel where they were quartered. It was miles away, but the street cars were not distant, and they set off in silence to reach it. Jack had acquiesced without a word to LeMar's idea. But Fate was not so obliging.

They had reached the corner, with the car line but two blocks distant, when a stream of passing automobiles caused them to halt momentarily just in front of the curbing, while they awaited an opportunity to cross. As they stood there they noticed a large, dark-red automobile speed down Willow Grove avenue and come to a stop within a few feet of them. It had come from the direction of the deserted house of the Necks which they had just quit.

In itself this was nothing remarkable, and probably the big red automobile would have found an opportunity to turn into the busy thoroughfare southward without attracting the particular attention of either LeMar or Jack, but for one trivial, apparently inconsequential, thing. It was the fact that the irrepressible Jack Brown began to whistle. He always whistled when he had nothing else to do. And it chanced that at this particular moment he was whistling that hauntingly sad, sweet melody which accompanied Gordon LeMar during his handkerchief manipulations; an Eastern waltz melody that had not yet become popular and was therefore not familiar to most people.

Its effect was almost instantaneous. He had scarcely whistled more than half a dozen bars of the music when there was a commotion evident inside the limousine. Both LeMar and Jack heard the unmistakable noises of a struggle, the quick thumping against the sides, the quick sound of feet, and then a volume of profanity in a hoarse and angry tone.

This attracted their attention, but it did not arouse their suspicions. It will readily be surmised that neither dreamed the struggle, whatever its nature, had been precipitated by the harmless whistling of an almost unknown

composition. Indeed, that connection was not established in their minds until long afterward.

But they learned suddenly and quickly enough the truth, or at least a big and vital part of it. The door of the great red car was suddenly hurled back with the violence of a furious struggle. As they stepped closer to see what was happening, an amazing situation confronted them.

There was a huge man, his face scratched and covered with blood, his lips parted, his breath coming in terrific gasps, struggling to hold back a white-faced, horror-eyed girl seeking to gather strength to scream. She saw LeMar and Jack, and her face was transfigured with wild, unbelieving, sudden joy. In that same instant they recognized her. She was Rose Kellar.

"Save me!" she sobbed.

As she spoke the man clapped his hands over her mouth and hurled her back into the darkness of the car. The chauffeur threw on the power, and like a rocket the automobile dashed away.

But not too quick for the magician to recognize the man in the machine. He had seen him too well ever to forget him or the red scar slashed across his cheek.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MAN WITH THE RED SCAR

"WHAT are we going to do?"

There was genuine anguish in Jack's voice as he turned to LeMar for guidance. But the magician had no need to tell him. Already he was off. Before the machine had rounded the corner, before the echo of Rose's voice had been drowned by the honking of the auto horns, the chugging of many motors, and the shouts of the drivers in that sea of late uptown traffic, he had acted. Out into the street he rushed, and Jack was right behind him.

The situation was not so difficult as at first appeared. For the first time that night the gods of chance were smiling on them. So congested was this busy corner that it was impossible for the driver of the big red car to make any speed. At any moment, of course, he might extricate himself from the tangle of automobiles and rush off down the avenue and away. If that happened, pursuit would be impossible. There was no time to hire a taxi, even if one were near, but if they did succeed in getting one, its small power would soon be outdistanced by the powerful engines of the fleeing machine.

LeMar knew all this; it all flashed through his mind as he darted into that whirling maze of moving machines, with their glaring headlights, and chauffeurs hurling curses and maledictions on his head. Every moment the lives of the conjurer and his friend were in danger from the cars, but they rushed on, scrambling in and out with the agility of men who know that time is precious and life and death hangs upon them.

As they reached the middle of the thoroughfare, an astonished policeman grabbed after them, roaring a warning, but they heeded him not. Before them was the red automobile, proceeding slowly, perforce, because in front of it, behind it, and all around it were other automobiles. Its way was blocked; until it was out of this maelstrom it could only creep along. In their hearts the panting LeMar and Jack Brown already exulted. They were not too late. The red automobile, containing Rose Kellar and the man with the red scar, could not get away. Another moment would tell the tale.

Panting and eager, they drew close on the fleeing machine. They almost stumbled over its huge tires, and they noticed that no license tag dangled from behind. Evidently the man with the red scar was determined to play safe.

As they reached the door of the car there was a sudden and complete halt. The machine stopped, as did all the others near it. Something had happened in the jam of cars some yards ahead, and for that instant movement was paralyzed. The red automobile, its horn tooting frantically, was still, immovable, at their side.

They had not been noticed. The chauffeur, a small, wiry man with a far, wild look in his eyes, that even then struck them as extraordinarily familiar, was staring straight ahead, feet and hands ready to dash off at the first break in the line. It was practically certain they had not been seen by the man inside the car. They would take him by surprise.

LeMar reached up and clutched the handle of the door. He turned it and pounced into the machine, with Jack right behind him. The business manager closed the door, so that their little affair might not be witnessed and interrupted.

They were entirely unprepared for the scene that met their gaze.

Lolling back on the large, richly furnished cushions, puffing coolly on a big cigar and affecting the most shocked surprise at their entrance, was the man with the red scar. They saw no traces of blood upon his face, nor emotion or excitement in his manner. He was merely amazed at the audacity of the two men who had thus summarily intruded the privacy of his automobile.

"What in the devil does this mean?" he asked, in well-bred anger.

LeMar gave him no answer, and Jack was too astonished for speech. Surely they had cause to be. This was undoubtedly the car in which they had just witnessed the struggle of Rose Kellar with this man, yet where was Rose Kellar now? Where was this man's anger, his raging excitement now? Where was all the wild intensity of the scene they had witnessed not five minutes before?

For the man with the red scar was alone. He sat up very straight now and looked them squarely in the eye, and repeated his demand as to who they were, and what was their business.

"Are you gunmen? I haven't got but twenty-five dollars on me," he wound up aggressively.

With a sinking, foolish feeling, LeMar and Jack sat down and faced him, still not knowing how to attack him. This was so utterly unexpected. As the whole situation danced before his excited mental vision, LeMar told himself it could not be. It was another of those impossible things; as impossible and yet as real as had been the transformation of the girl he floated in the air from Rose Kellar to a strange deaf mute. Rage filled him, and resentment at being duped and tricked; hot anger at not knowing how. For the machine had always been in sight, and there had apparently been no opportunity for the girl to have left the car unobserved. The whole thing was preposterous, and yet bewilderingly, hopelessly true. For there were but three men in the car, and no girl to be seen.

"Where is Rose Kellar?" demanded LeMar hoarsely.

The man with the red scar lifted his eyebrows questioningly, and drew a long puff on his cigar, as if anxious to steady his nerves.

"I beg your pardon?" he asked, with an inquiring inflection. "You see, gentlemen, you have me at a disadvantage. I do not know who you are. I do not know from whence you came. I do not know what you want. I do not know what you are talking about. Forgive me, please, if I seem dull or stupid. Will you smoke?"

He drew forth a silver cigar case and offered it. LeMar and Jack ignored it, as if his hand were not in the world at all.

"Where is Rose Kellar?" repeated LeMar with inexorable sternness. "What have you done with her? If you want to keep healthy, I advise you to open up now, for I'm here on business!"

The man with the red scar gazed about him uncomfortably.

"Mad! Quite mad!" he muttered to himself, with a sidelong glance of anxiety at LeMar. "Who are you, anyway?" he asked petulantly. "It seems to me I have seen you somewhere before. Hasn't your face been around

on the billboards, or street car signs, or something like that? Perhaps you endorsed a soup, or a new brand of cigars, or maybe you—anyway, what do you want?"

He settled back as if he were no longer fearful of his visitors, and was getting mildly curious. He was exasperatingly superior.

"You are responsible for the disappearance of Rose Kellar from the Globe Theater this evening," said LeMar coldly. "I know your connection with the case. I know that you were at the stage-door this evening. I know some other things about your movements since then—quite enough to hold you until further evidence can be obtained," he lied to strengthen his words. "You had better meet me now, when I am inclined to be merciful, for I've got the goods on you!"

The man with the red scar smiled in tolerant amusement.

"You are a liar!" he replied.

LeMar sprang up as if to attack him, but he got no farther. He had failed to notice in his excitement that the machine had stopped. Now something came down on him, out of the nowhere it seemed; a sudden, stunning sensation, as if all had grown suddenly black, chaotic—and then nothing at all.

A little girl was looking at them inquisitively. "Be you looking for the Necks?" she asked boldly.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MAGIC AGAINST MAGIC

ONE hour later Gordon LeMar opened his eyes.

It was a little difficult for him to get his bearings at first. There was an uncomfortable feeling about his head, and as his sensations grew clearer he realized that this uncomfortable feeling was really a throbbing, merciless pain. Then he felt about and his fingers played over the roughness of a spread. He gradually began to take in his surroundings, and eventually it dawned upon him that he was in his own room at the Hotel Garrison.

He was in his pajamas, he noticed next. The room was lit brilliantly; his clothes were hanging neatly in their places. All was as it should be. Could it be possible that all he had gone through had been only a dream? Had Rose Kellar not disappeared after all? Had he really experienced that ghostly adventure in the deserted house of the Necks? The automobile, the cry of his vanished assistant, the encounter in the machine with the suave man of the red scar—was all this dreaming, nightmare stuff of one's uneasy sleep?

Instinctively his hand went up to his head. No! It had not been a dream. His head was neatly bandaged, as if it had been given careful attention. He had been hit then. Ah, yes! Certainly he had been hit. He had been talking with that beast in the red auto, and the beast had called him a liar, and he—some one had felled him then. How and who? LeMar settled back weakly, with a sigh. Those questions were too difficult at that moment. They must wait until his head stopped throbbing that way.

But thoughts of Rose would not leave him, and as they came they brought with them new vigor and determination. Though all around him was still a little hazy, he sat bolt upright, his mind made up to lose no time. He judged he had not been unconscious so very long. It must be about two or three o'clock in the morning. Where was Jack? And how had he reached home?

Jack was not in the room; in fact, no one was in the room, as LeMar verified by a quick survey. His eyes were growing clearer now, and he felt more himself. He was filled with an abiding curiosity to know what had happened during the time that he had been unconscious to what passed around him. He reached for the bell button to summon a boy and make inquiries.

Pinned to the button was a note. It was in an envelope on which the monogram of the Garrison Hotel was printed, and it had evidently been written at his own secretary desk over there in the other corner of the room. Consumed with eagerness, and altogether forgetful of his aching head, LeMar tore it from its fastenings and ripped up the flap. There were two sheets of hotel stationery folded inside, and with trembling hands the magician spread them out before him and read:

"My Most Esteemed Professor LeMar:

"As a wizard you are a wonder, my dear fellow, but really you will never make a success as a detective. Your methods are too direct, far too crude to show any possibilities of improvement with study, research and painstaking effort. Stick to your stage mysteries, my friend, and leave the real ones, and particularly this one, severely alone. It will be better for all concerned, and especially

for Miss Rose Kellar, in whom you display such a profound and suspicious interest. I do not mind admitting, professor, that I enjoy seeing you behind the footlights, but I must insist that you stay there and not meddle in affairs that do not in the least concern you.

"I am quite aware that you wish to know, naturally, what has taken place since you entered the machine which I had hired for the occasion. And, by the way, it will do you no good to try to trace me in that way, as another person hired it for me, without knowing for whom it was intended, so that trail would lead you only up a blind alley.

"I have a little portable device—simply a little electric affair, which I invented, attachable to any electrically equipped automobile—by which my chauffeur and I can remain in constant though silent communication. I do not mind telling you that my chauffeur and I are inseparable friends, and that he is a very clever and a very daring man. If he were not, he could not remain in my confidence, which means that he could not remain on earth, as he would then be dangerous.

"Well! By means of this portable device, one end of which is connected with my pocket, the other to my chauffeur's ear, I ticked off, by telegraph, a full explanation of my predicament. I was captured! And he got rid of you and your well-dressed friend by the simple—and rather disgustingly elemental—fashion of black-jacking you. He stopped the machine, hit you both on your heads, and over you fell into our tender hands.

"Now note how graciously kind we have been to you. We could have thrown you out in the street, we could have dropped you overboard, we could have done worse. But we did nothing of the kind. First, I managed, with the aid of some material purchased at a nearby drug-store, to attend your wounds. I had five years in medicine and surgery—one year post-graduate at Johns Hopkins—and so I did a fairly neat job, I think. Then I bundled you up nicely and brought you, of all places in the world, to your own hotel.

"There is one point about which I must really ask your forgiveness. It was necessary, in order to avoid an embracing colloquy, to offer some kind of logical, reasonable and simple explanation to the hotel clerk. I adopted the simple expedient of informing them that you and your friend were intoxicated, and had been injured in a drunken brawl.

"Your friend is in his room, next to you. I did not write him a note, as I fear his intelligence would not appreciate the finer points which I insist enter into all my correspondence. You may tell him about it, and tell him I am sorry a little blood got on the braided cord of his spectacles. I left one dollar on his bureau which will buy him a new one.

"Just one other thing. I am not going to tell you how I managed the sudden disappearance of the young lady. As an illusionist, you might be able to figure that out, as I had to do. But you may rest assured that unless the young lady complies with my wishes she will die a most horrible death at my hands. And you may rest assured, my charming young friend, that your life will go out like the flame of a candle in the draft if you get in my way. You have never heard of me before. Leave me to my delicate little whim and fancies, and my artistic pursuits, and you can go ahead and do anything else you like, with no interference from me. But raise one finger to oppose me and your last hour is set. God bless you!

"RAVEN."

CHAPTER TWELVE

A REAL CLUE

WHEN Jack Brown, in some consternation, entered LeMar's room, not half an hour later, he found the magician still sitting erect in the bed, staring very hard at his own rather bedraggled image in the mirror. He had no inkling of what had transpired, but had rushed to LeMar's room as soon as he had regained his senses. LeMar could not restrain a smile at the unkempt bewilderment of his friend, who stood regarding him in the doorway with an air of wearied astonishment.

But the situation called neither for smiles nor wasted wonder, but for action. No one knew that better than LeMar. Silently he offered the self-explanatory note to Jack Brown, while he knitted his brows again and tried to reconcentrate his scattered mental forces. Stirring back in the dim recesses of the conjurer's memory was a clue, and he was doing his best now to rescue it. It was elusive, intangible, tantalizing and obscure, and the hazy condition of his mind now, as a result of the blow on his head, made thinking a labor of thrice-fold difficulty. But LeMar was a man who never balked at difficulty, and he was never willing to admit defeat. He told himself doggedly that he had just begun to fight. Even in his present battered condition he felt the tang of real sport in matching his courage, his skill and his audacity against such a merciless, conscienceless man as the writer of that note had proclaimed himself to be. And still that lurking suspicion that refused to define kept dancing like an elfin thing in his mind, always escaping capture.

He reached over to the little table beside his bed and secured the telephone. Jack was still immersed in an excited perusal of the note from the man who had signed himself "Raven." LeMar ordered a neat little supper with a bottle of wine to be brought to his room immediately, an order which quite upset the decidedly *blasé* phone clerk at the desk. When he hung up the receiver, Jack had finished reading Raven's message.

"Whew!" exclaimed the business manager as he threw himself in a chair. "We're up against a bear-cat!"

His brows still contracted, LeMar looked his friend squarely in the eye.

"I'm going to know something in a minute, Jack," he said.

Jack only stared. For once the loquacious fellow was silenced. The events of the night had robbed him of all his picturesque expletives and explosives. He did not know what to say. He was losing his capacity to be surprised. He merely waited for LeMar to explain himself.

"That cruel note there," continued the magician, "is a blessing in disguise. It has given us a starting-point which we lacked before. We know now where we stand."

"How?" inquired Jack.

"Before that note was left for me we did not know what to think. Now we know something. We know that Rose Kellar has been kidnaped for a purpose. We know she has been kidnaped by an unscrupulous, self-confessed murderer, who desires her to do something, the nature of which we do not now comprehend. Our line of action must now be to find that man. *And I think I know who he is!*"

"You mean you think you know the identity of Raven?"

"Exactly. Or, at least, I know how to find out. Ever since that moment that I saw Rose in his clutches, in that wild moment when the opened automobile slid past us, my mind has been busy trying to dig up from past memories the name of that man. I am certain I have seen him before. I am certain that I shall soon remember—Eureka!"

The last word the magician shot out like a vocal explosion. He leaped out of bed in his sudden excitement.

"It must be true!" he said, after a tense pause. "He has been missing from America for years!"

"Who?" asked Jack in exasperated impatience.

"Wait!" bade the magician, as he paced the floor. "We must be certain about it. We must see Nagen about it. Nagen will tell us. Nagen knows everything about everybody, and Nagen never forgets. We must get Nagen out of bed!"

"Who is Nagen?" persisted Jack.

"Never mind! I'll introduce him to you before another hour is over. We shall not rest, Jack, old boy, until this thing is settled, one way or the other. We do not know why Raven has kidnaped Rose, but we're going to get her back before he gets a chance to put his hands on her again."

A rap came at the door, and a waiter came in with a tray, on which a tempting little meal had been prepared. It warmed their hearts to gaze on it. Though both were distressed at the peril of the missing girl, and eager to be at the search, they already felt the need of stimulating themselves for the trials they felt sure lay ahead of them. It did occur to Jack that they ought to be moving without pausing for a meal, but he had naturally accepted the self-imposed leadership of LeMar and so he did not question what he had ordered. They fell to on the viands and the wine without loss of time, and fifteen minutes later felt renewed and refreshed for whatever might befall.

Only once did they pause during the meal. That was when LeMar became suddenly but laconically communicative.

"I told you!" he said, with a glass of wine half-lifted to his lips, "I told you once, Jack, that a magician would make an ideal detective. I tell you now that a magician is the only person who can solve this strange puzzle."

Jack was munching, but he shook his head to indicate that he wanted to know why.

"Because," replied LeMar, "it was by magic that Rose Kellar vanished for the second time to-night. I was a fool not to have guessed it. I was a fool not to have denounced that scoundrel then and there. He is turning our own art against us, Jack. He used a principle of stage magic to vanish that girl under our very eyes, and I was taken in by it. And I can see now that it will be by using magic against him that I shall win her back."

"You mean," spluttered Jack, himself vanishing a big mouthful in the same instant, "that you will use magic in your detective work? You mean that by magic you will recover Rose Kellar?"

"By magic!" answered LeMar, but he refused to explain another word. All Jack's attempts at conversation from that moment on were fruitless. The magician was planning his course now, and his dancing eyes showed that he was not engaged on a hopeless task. There was a scheme in his head which promised well. Any one could see that, who noted the gleam of eager interest in his eyes, and the way that his fingers were beating a devil taps on the table. Jack noticed that as he dressed he stowed some arrangement under his coat, but he could not guess what it was.

A few moments later they were in a taxi cab, rolling under the giant L structure on the East Side. Nagen, LeMar had explained, lived on Third avenue, not far from Eighty-second street. He would not mind being called out of bed, for Nagen was a good fellow, under any and all circumstances.

The magician and his friend left the taxicab at the corner and walked to the center of the block. The dwelling-place of this mysterious friend of the magician was on the third floor of the place, the lower floor being given over to a store. At the entrance to the left there were three bells, and beside this, on a small plate, was the name "Nagen." They read it with difficulty by the light of the street lamps near by.

LeMar pressed the button, without relaxing the pressure of his thumb, for several minutes. Again and again he rang it, until at last there came a little clicking noise at the door and it fell back a little, the latch having been released. The two partners of the night stepped into the narrow hallway and began the ascent of the stairs. They were half-way up when they discovered a figure on the first landing. It was a very small man, with touselled hair and a sandy mustache, holding a candle, and staring with unmitigated curiosity at the two men mounting the steps.

"Hello, Charley!" called out LeMar. "Don't you know me?"

"LeMar!" cried Nagen, in a transport of delight. "Nobody I'd sooner have get me out of bed than you. Come right up. But what's the big idea?"

LeMar waited until they were in the neatly furnished reception-room at the front of the little flat. Nagen lit the gas, and then turned again inquiringly to his visitors.

"Nagen," began LeMar abruptly. "Charley Nagen, you're supposed to have the greatest collection of old books, photographs, programs and other magical relics among all the amateur magicians in America. Is that right?"

"Outside of Houdini and Ellison," admitted Nagen with great honesty.

"Well! You showed me a scrapbook you had once, with photographs in it of famous magicians then appearing before the public—I think it was dated in 1915. I'd like to see that scrapbook now."

Nagen darted a quick little glance at LeMar, as if the question of his sanity or his sobriety had just occurred to him. Without a word he shuffled over to a little bookcase, which he opened reverently and rummaged around for a moment or two. Then he drew forth a bulky volume and spread it on the top of the old-fashioned square piano which occupied one portion of the room.

"Come here, Jack," said LeMar, and there was a thrilling little note in his voice, as if he felt himself on the trail of something vital and startlingly important. Nagen stood back, while the two bent over the scrapbook, and LeMar quickly turned the leaves. About the middle of the book he paused, and drew back the book quickly, so that Jack did not see.

"Charley," said LeMar, "who is this man?"

Nagen came closer and gave one glance at the portrait which he himself had pasted in the book a few years before.

"That is Doctor Grim!" he said decidedly. "Very few people remember him now. He was only here one season. He came from Australia with a big magic show and toured the country. Then all at once he disappeared. There were queer stories circulated about him; I've got some notes of him there in my scrapbook of biographies. He was one of the best magicians who ever came to this country—it was a loss to the stage when he left. Why?"

LeMar made him no reply. Instead, he passed the book silently to Jack. And the business manager recognized the picture as Raven, the man with the red scar.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DOCTOR GRIM

At a word from LeMar, the obliging Nagen passed into another room, where more of his treasures were kept, and presently reappeared bearing another scrapbook. This he laid beside the other on the piano, and hastily ran his fingers over the pages. He stopped at a place where a sheet of typewritten notations had been carefully pasted in.

"I got 'em all, Mr. LeMar," he said, with a broad smile. "There ain't no man in the magic business I ain't got the dots on. They say, some of the professionals, that the magical amateurs are pests, but they know where to come when they want something!"

Ignoring this, LeMar bent over the opened page, with Jack close beside him. Together they read this surprising entry:

"GRIM. Dr. Raven Grim. Supposedly born in Australia. Came to America with a magic show in 1915, and toured America for one season, playing the popular priced houses. Was quite successful, and his subsequent disappearance created some talk in the theatrical world. Wild rumors were circulated concerning him. He was reported to have led, at one time, the life of a bush ranger and an outlaw in the wilder portions of Australia. Notorious for his bold nature, and his uncompromising attitude on everything in which he was engaged. Those who played in his company were said to have lived in terror of him. Many were heard to wonder why he had taken to the profession of conjuring. Was always experimenting with scientific effects, to produce new illusions for his show. Was also said to have enormous financial resources, the results of his bushwacking days. Many vain attempts were said to have been made by the

Australian police to find the hiding-place of his ill-gotten gains, but never with success."

LeMar and Jack Brown exchanged quick looks of understanding. Certainly this corresponded well with what they knew of Raven. The name Raven Grim, too, seemed conclusive. And while this brought them no nearer the solution of the mystery on which they were bent, it at least cleared the way for the work they had in hand. Nagen, meanwhile, was getting restless from curiosity.

"Would you mind telling me why you wanted to get this information at this hour in the morning?" he asked LeMar. "It looks sort of funny."

His ingenuous manner brought a smile to the face of the conjurer, but he shook his head.

"Are you still the New York correspondent for the *Sphinx?*" asked the magician, apparently irrelevantly, and naming a magazine devoted to the interests of magic and magicians. Nagen shook his head in the affirmative.

"Then," replied LeMar, "I can only say that you will have a first-class story to send the editor if we get what we are going after. Beyond that I cannot say a word now. Good-night, and many thanks, Charley!"

The puzzled collector was forced to be content, and led them to the stairway, where he lighted them down with his candle. Once more on the street, Jack faced LeMar with something like severity.

"Now, what on earth can we do next?" he asked.

LeMar smiled, with a suggestion of a superior air that nettled Jack just a little. The business manager felt that he was no longer altogether in the confidence of the magician, and he resented the fact just a little. He would prefer to think that he knew all the cards in the hand of his friend, but evidently the latter was not ready at that moment to play the game in that way.

"We shall see what we shall see," murmured the magician, and not another word passed between the two friends for the next five minutes. But things were happening which bore an important relation to the situation. LeMar stepped up to the taxi driver, paid him and dismissed him. Then the two set off down deserted Third avenue, which at that hour was very dark and lonesome. The fall of their feet echoed across the empty street, drowned only once by the savage, roaring rush over their heads of a belated elevated train.

Down Third avenue they continued until they reached a dark street in the upper Seventies. Into this they turned quickly, LeMar seizing Jack's arm and almost dragging him with one mighty effort around the corner. Of course, Jack was surprised, but he was getting used to unexpected tactics by this time and soon recovered his balance. He gave himself up to LeMar's leadership absolutely, which was well. The magician skipped into a dark doorway, with Jack right in back of him. LeMar put his finger to his lips and they crouched back in the shadows.

Suddenly they heard a sound. Some one else had turned the corner and had suddenly hastened his stride into an energetic walk. The footsteps were coming nearer.

In a flash Jack understood. LeMar had guessed they were being followed. He had not regarded that as a calamity, but had welcomed it as an opportunity. They had eluded their shadow, and Jack could foresee their next step. They would follow the man who had set out to follow them.

Meanwhile, the footsteps came closer.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TO THE RAVEN'S HIDING-PLACE

WHEN the man who had been trailing them turned the corner he evidently saw at once that he had been tricked. LeMar guessed rightly that he had believed himself secure from detection, and felt sure that by keeping about half a square behind them he could follow them throughout the night without himself being observed. Accordingly, when he came around the bend and saw his men had vanished, he hastened his pace in the hope of passing them as they were entering some house on the block. His job then would be to wait until they came out.

As LeMar heard him coming closer, the danger of this suddenly suggested itself. Instead of going back to his superior, this shadow might remain on guard until daybreak. Moreover, they themselves might be ousted from their hiding-place at any moment. Some one emerging through the door of the vestibule in which they were sheltered would discover them immediately. Explanations would then be in order, and however they might bluff, the end was fairly certain. They would be forced into the street again, and while they might manage to shake their shadow, they would surely have no further opportunity to trail him.

These reflections were speedier than a flash of lightning. In less than two minutes the man would be opposite them. He would pass them, go to the end of the block, and probably return. They must do something. LeMar fidgeted behind the door, racking his brain for some expedient that would serve them in this latest emergency.

"Good Lord! I'm getting sleepy!" whispered Jack.

At any other time the remark would have irritated LeMar to exasperation. He knew Jack didn't mean it. The business manager was simply irrepressible; he had to be saying something, and having nothing better to say at the time, he observed that he was sleepy. To a man of LeMar's temperament, under such circumstances, such a jest could hardly prove otherwise than annoying. But in that time of uncertainty it brought with it a happy inspiration that solved the problem.

"Jack," whispered the magician hurriedly, "you've solved it. This fellow is liable to wait for us to show ourselves and stay here all night. He thinks we've gone in some house on this block with some important object, and he'll never leave us. Sh! Wait a minute!"

The wizard's eye was at the crack formed by the hinges of the door. The man they believed had followed them was about to pass. They could hear the beating of their hearts as they waited.

He was walking very rapidly as he came suddenly into their line of vision. Like a shadow picture on a screen he darted past, visible to them only for a second. They strained their eyes to see him, fearful that he would go by too quickly. But it was enough. They both saw and recognized him. He was the chauffeur who had driven the car in which Rose Kellar had been a prisoner.

LeMar's fingers closed around Jack's wrist, impelling silence; he waited until the sound of retreating footsteps told him the chauffeur was out of earshot. Even then he whispered his plan.

"Say good-night loudly," the magician said quickly. "Remark that you will meet me in the morning, and that everything will come out all right. Do it naturally. Tell me to stay here and get a good night's sleep. Then go to the next L station, go up and jump on a car, and go back to the hotel. Go to bed and wait until I show up. I will let you hear from me."

Then LeMar had an incipient riot on his hands. In profane whispers and elaborate gestures, with vigorous shakings of his head and gritting of his teeth, Jack Brown declared his complete animosity to such a plan. He refused to listen to LeMar's entreaties. He was a partner in the night's adventure, and he intended to stick.

But LeMar refused to be budged from his intention.

"Can the argument!" he said, not unkindly, and his slangy words had the air of *camaraderie* in them. "It's just got to be, old fellow, and it's got to be quick. We've got to fool that fellow, and fool him now. He'll be back presently. Go on and do what I tell you to. Remember, we're not out on a lark. Rose Kellar's life is in danger!"

Obediently, but very unwillingly, Jack prepared to leave. Having been graduated from the stage into the front of the house, he was sure to give a good account of himself in the little comedy which LeMar had outlined.

and the conjurer waited with entire assurance that Jack would carry it off well.

The business manager stepped carefully from behind the door and then began to speak. He did not raise his voice too high, but he made his words clear enough for the man down the street to hear.

"Good-night, LeMar!" he said. "Don't come back to the hotel to-morrow. It isn't wise. You stay here and let me handle matters as you directed. Try to get some sleep now. Everything will come out all right, you can bank on that. Good-night!"

Then, to the surprise of LeMar, he deliberately raised his foot and gave a strong kick against the door. It was expertly done, the result of inspiration. On the silence of the night it sounded exactly as if a door had been closed. But LeMar trembled for himself. That kick against the door was loud enough to wake up any one in the house; he felt his own position would soon become untenable.

Jack, meanwhile, sauntered down the steps and gazed carelessly up and down. LeMar wondered what he saw. With a buoyant little whistle—for Jack was an inveterate whistler—he descended to the pavement and set off briskly in the direction of the Third avenue L, which was less than half a square distant. The nearest station was three blocks away.

From his hidden post of observation LeMar watched eagerly. He heard Jack's whistle, as it grew fainter and fainter in the distance. Then along came a north-bound elevated train, with a crashing, roaring rush that drowned out every sound, and the anxious magician could not tell whether the man had swallowed the bait or not.

He was not kept long in doubt. Before the noise of the train had died out the chauffeur of Raven came suddenly into view. He made straight for the steps which Jack Brown had vacated not two minutes before.

LeMar braced himself for a struggle. The chauffeur was slenderly built, and the wizard had no fear in a fair fight.

The man entered the vestibule stealthily and quickly, moving with a cat-like noiselessness, after having glanced rapidly all around him to see if he were observed. Once within the vestibule the object of his mission became apparent. He was not there searching for LeMar. He had another purpose.

In his hand was a small flashlight, which he turned on and played the tiny stream of light over the mail-boxes, each with its little card bearing the names of those who occupied the apartments. The man studied each name rapidly but carefully. Evidently he was prepared to give a full report to his employer.

Then, replacing his flashlight in his pocket, he darted out of the vestibule and rushed off on a silent run for Third avenue. One important piece of information gained, he evidently was now hot on the trail of Jack Brown, believing he might learn something from that young gentleman's movements after all.

Hope once more in his heart, LeMar, too, emerged to the street. But not before he had gazed carefully around the edge of the doorway and assured himself that the chauffeur had himself rounded Third avenue. He blessed the fates which had kept the policeman on the beat out of the way, for such suspicious actions would undoubtedly have drawn him down upon them had he seen them.

The magician set off, sure in his conviction that the man he was trailing would lead him to Rose Kellar.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE HOUSE OF MURMURS

IN the beginning things happened exactly as LeMar had hoped and planned for.

The chauffeur of Dr. Raven Grim had caught sight of Jack as soon as he rounded the corner. LeMar's business manager purposely had sauntered, so that he should not be lost in the dark shadows beneath the elevated structure. And Jack was whistling so merrily and so jauntily that the trailer, LeMar felt sure, was completely deceived.

Thus, when the magician rounded the corner, there was a little procession of three, strung out in less than two blocks. Jack was making his way unconcernedly to the steps leading to the L station not far away. The chauffeur of Doctor Grim was tracking him silently, loitering as Jack loitered, and hastening his steps whenever Jack took it in his head to hurry. Behind these two came LeMar, determined to play the game out to the finish, to stake his all for the prize which he held so dear.

He hoped that the man ahead would give up his pursuit as soon as he saw Jack safely on the L train. LeMar had adopted one always valuable trick of the detective. It had come to him naturally—the knack of putting himself automatically into the shoes of his antagonist, and striving to understand his psychology, to get his viewpoint, so that he might anticipate what he might do before he did it. This was the tactics he had employed in the present crisis. All the schemes buzzing in his head for the rescue of Rose Kellar, and the capture of the relentless Doctor Grim, depended on his success in inducing this chauffeur to lead him to the bandit's hiding-place.

"Just give me the chance!" cried LeMar, in a little whisper, addressing the moving shadow of the chauffeur, half a block away. "I dare you! A magical detective matched against a magical criminal! Well, Doctor Grim, from Australia, or from wherever else you may be, I'm ready for you. My magic is greater than your diabolic capacity for crime, and here is where white witchcraft will triumph over black art!"

With these things in his mind he continued the little game of hide and seek in which they were engaged with fresh enthusiasm. Matters were going well, and the crucial test was almost before them. They had crossed the last street—Jack and the man behind him—and were almost at the steps leading up to the platform. The chauffeur halted and instinctively LeMar stepped into a doorway. There he was invisible, but he realized that if the man he was following were to turn and retrace his steps, he must face discovery and total failure. That was a chance which must be met. LeMar could only watch and wait prayerfully.

The chauffeur stepped out into the street, where, masked by the darkness near a great steel girder, he was almost obliterated. Plainly he was sure he was safe from observation. He watched Jack climb the long flight of steps, and waited until, a little while later, a south-bound train rumbled up, stopped and then rushed off again.

But still the man under the steel girder did not move. He was too crafty to be thus careless of his own business. Certain that the train had gone, he stepped boldly from his hiding-place, and LeMar saw him go up the L steps himself.

For the moment LeMar was nonplussed. Somehow, he had never associated this man with the idea of riding downtown on an L. This will serve to show that, with all the brains and cunning and courage in the world, LeMar was not yet a finished detective. If he were, he would have tried to have looked far enough ahead to foresee any emergency. He had felt so certain that the chauffeur of Doctor Grim would not return downtown on the elevated train that he had not considered what his own course would be if he did.

As it turned out, however, this worry was without cause. The man had not climbed up the steps for the purpose of catching the next train, but, as LeMar surmised on seeing him soon reappear, to assure himself that his quarry had really taken himself home to the hotel. Possibly he had inquired of the guard if the man who mounted those steps had really boarded the train. This was a crafty fellow, this assistant of Dr. Raven Grim; a man who took no chances, possibly because he knew what to expect from his terrible employer if he were to fail.

LeMar's nerves were tingling now. Things were going too well, he told himself with susperstitious dread. Without glancing either to the right or the left, the chauffeur

set off at a fast pace, and LeMar, letting him put about a block between them, started in pursuit. They were off, and the magician was happier than he had been since the troubles of the night had overtaken him. Unarmed, except with the knowledge that he was up against the most audacious, unscrupulous man with whom he had ever come in contact, and a magical weapon in which he placed such confidence, he set off joyously, eager for the moment when he and Raven Grim again should stand face to face, no matter how unequal the odds. There was no fear in LeMar's heart, any more than there was overconfidence. He fully appreciated the danger that he was soon to run; his experiences earlier in the evening had been ample confirmation of all the threats in the letter from Raven. But he cared not, because he was ready to make any sacrifice in behalf of the imprisoned girl. He was ready to give his all, and thus he had no further reason to be afraid of anything. Indeed, he felt high hopes of being able to effect a rescue, if given half a fighting chance.

He was very cautious, and yet not too much so. That is to say, he did not go slinking along in the shadows of the buildings, like a wary gunman, about to hold up some one. That would have been the surest way of attracting the attention of any one else who was passing. It was exceedingly difficult to manage, because, if he did anything to arouse the suspicions of the man in front, the game would end right then and there. And in the hush of the early morning it is almost as impossible task to follow a man, perhaps for miles, and not do something to apprise him of that fact.

Luckily for LeMar, it was not necessary to follow the chauffeur far, else it is possible that he would have been detected, and the outcome of this affair might have been altogether different. The man walked down Third avenue for three more blocks and then swung west, covering block after block, until he was approaching the Drive. Behind him, as relentless as his own shadow, crept LeMar, always walking so that his feet made no sound on the pavements, always ready to dart back of some sheltering steps, if his man were to turn quickly.

They were less than a square from the Drive when LeMar knew that his work was at an end. The chauffeur stood at the curb, and suddenly began coughing violently. It was an unusually well-counterfeited cough, but LeMar felt sure that it was counterfeit, and that it was done for a purpose. He believed it was a signal to some one inside one of the houses.

In this view he was presently confirmed by what happened. The man he had followed rang no bell; gave no additional evidence of his desire to enter the house before which he had taken his stand. He simply walked up the steps, and before he had had time to fit a key into the lock, LeMar heard the slamming of a heavy door.

The magician waited for no more. His eyes intent on the house in which he felt sure Rose Kellar was a prisoner of an ex-Australian bandit, he walked forward swiftly, but still silently. The house was one of those large, ornate, five-story brown-stone ones, and bore an air of the utmost elegance. Its basement windows were guarded with curving, bellying, twisted iron bars of Venetian design, and as his eyes traveled up the front of the place, the magician was surprised to note that bars such as these were in front of all the many windows at the front. It gave him a new insight into the elaborate arrangements which Doctor Grim had made for his mysterious pursuits; it gave him new fear for the fate of Rose Kellar, if he were too late, and new courage to go on.

As he stood there a strange sound arrested his attention. It was a confusion of murmurings, a low shrillness of many excited voices—thrilling, because there was so much wild passion and earnest intensity, such tragedy and such burlesque, in their notes. It was like a low-pitched but hysterical chorus of women's voices coming from somewhere in or near this large, dark house of Dr. Raven Grim. LeMar wondered at it, puzzled over it, with all his soul.

As his eyes rested vacantly on the darkened front, while he struggled to interpret those singular sounds, he saw a heavy brass plate at one side of the door. It glistened from the rays of a street lamp, and he saw it was lettered with a legend. Rather incautiously, he mounted the steps, where he could read the sign. It was a stunning surprise to him when he did read it.

"THE RETREAT OF THE RAVENS. NERVOUS CASES A SPECIALTY."

So this was a sanitarium. Those were voices of mad women he had heard. And his Raven—what new mask was this? LeMar began to believe the problem was even deeper than he had dreamed.

He did not need to reconnoiter the premises to learn that this house was practically impregnable. Already he knew enough of Dr. Raven Grim to be sure of that. But LeMar did not care. He had gotten what he had asked for and he was satisfied; the future now rested with him. In the chase after the Raven chauffeur he had promised the Fates that if he would only be led to the lair of this criminal he would ask no more; that he would then be able to fight his own battles. For LeMar was hugging a strange weapon to his bosom, a weapon which gave him such confidence that he wanted only to be face to face with the abductor.

Therefore, he wasted no time seeking a way in which to steal into the retreat of the Raven. Instead he walked boldly up the steps and rang long and loudly.

The door was opened by the very man LeMar had followed to the house. On the latter's face a slow astonishment spread as he beheld the identity of this early morning visitor.

"Tell Doctor Grim that LeMar is here!" said the magician sternly, and stepped over the threshold.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE LATEST ILLUSION OF DOCTOR GRIM

LEMAR was left waiting in the dimly lighted, luxurious hallway only a very few moments.

The returning man-servant, chauffeur and confidential assistant of Doctor Grim asked him in a low voice to follow him down to a door at the farther end. The fellow's face was as cryptic as the sphinx. LeMar entered this doorway and found himself in a brilliantly illuminated reception room. Not five feet away from him was Dr. Raven Grim.

Faultlessly fitted in full evening dress, his graying hair thrust back adventurously above his high forehead, his unnaturally pale face lighted with condescending welcome, the abductor of Rose Kellar made a dignified bow before the magician. Even in his turbulent, excited state of mind LeMar could not help observing the polished air, the finished deportment of the man. He was a Chesterfield among criminals.

"We meet again, my good LeMar," said Grim unctuously. "Sit down and rest yourself before I kill you!"

"Bring Rose Kellar to me before I kill you!" cried LeMar, and his voice, too, was cool and threatening.

"There's a contradiction of desires," said Grim amiably. "We shall settle it this way: I shall let you see the young lady, and then we shall see who dies!"

He deliberately turned his back upon the magician and strode over easily to a cellaret. His coolness was meant to be disarming. Quickly LeMar looked around him. He was entirely alone with Dr. Raven Grim, and while he did not know how many invisible eyes were watching them, how many invisible hands waiting to interfere, should there be a struggle, he did not much care. For LeMar was holding back a trump card, and though he was playing a lone hand he was beginning to believe more and more that he was going to win. Meanwhile, Doctor Grim set glasses and a decanter on the table.

"Ordinarily," he apologized, "I do not mix my own drinks. Alphonse, my man, whom you followed to-night,

is a past master. But there are times when things must be said and done of which even my confidential Alphonse must not know too much. He will never ask a question about you—of that you may be entirely sure. The fact that you and I are alone is all that is necessary for Alphonse, for he knew that was my desire. Now, LeMar, I must entreat you to sit down."

"I prefer to stand," LeMar answered.

"Then pardon me if I do not follow your example," replied Doctor Grim as he threw himself lazily into a comfortable chair, of broad and generous dimensions. His handsome, but cruel face, against the green velvet of the chair cushion, and the light playing full upon it, was a strange study. There was so much of ability there as to deceive even a practiced observer. But, with a key to the man's character, the markings of his character stood out in bold relief — the symbols of genius, prostituted to evil.

Doctor Grim held up his glass, in which the green liquor sparkled and glowed, and studied it musingly.

"For the love of a woman," he said, "many men have done foolish things. Poor old Mark Antony—what an ass he made of himself for that Cleopatra woman! In some of the writings of contemporaneous scribes I have read that Cleopatra was an overwhelmingly fascinating creature. But she was just like any other woman, after all, and there were thousands of others to pick from, to say nothing of Mrs. Mark Antony, who was called Octavia. Yet for the sake of Cleopatra Mark Antony lost everything, and at last, LeMar, life itself.

LeMar saw the plight of Rose Kellar. She was seated, with her hands resting on a sort of stock in front of him.

"Now, you are just as big a fool as Mark Antony. There are thousands of other women in the world, and yet because I happen to need the one who had caught your eye —pouf! You make it necessary for me to make away with you. And you know you are a clever fellow, LeMar, a damned clever fellow, and I hate to see you go!"

He lighted a cigar, leisurely, almost lazily, and watched the rings of smoke as they mounted like fragrant incense to the ceiling. Once he stole a quiet, calculating look at LeMar, but if he expected to find any weakening signs there, he was disappointed. Rigid, raging, prevented from springing at his cool monster's throat only by the prompting hope that something would happen, something would turn up that would give him an advantage, the magician stood with folded arms.

"Dr. Raven Grim, you have made a mistake," said LeMar, with a contemptuous smile that did not escape the attention of his smiling enemy. "I shall not be killed by you, now, or at any other time. You are going to the penitentiary, and your journey will soon begin. You will be lucky if you escape the electric chair!"

With a sudden burst of laughter Doctor Grim flung back his head and gave vent to the heartiest amusement. For a moment he paused, sat up and stared impudently at LeMar, then relaxed again into derisive laughter. It was the first crack in the fine veneer of his polished bearing; the first showing through of his bushwacking, primitive lack of those qualities which make a real gentleman.

"My dear LeMar," he cried, wiping away his tears "Don't be absurd now. Do you know what you are, so far as the law and the prophets are concerned? You are a lunatic! This is a lunatic asylum. I am a lunatic doctor. I have been established here for years. What chance would you have, if you went to one of my windows and called for help? The passersby, even the policeman on the beat, would say that one of my patients was getting unruly. That thing has happened a good many times already—it would not be unusual. The police would remember it in all the years I have been here."

"Yes. You have been here since 1915," shot back LeMar with savage meaning.

The insinuation did not miss its mark. Master of himself always, even Grim could not conceal the fact that he was startled. He did not know that LeMar knew anything of his past. He turned toward the magician with a new glint in his eyes. "You seem well posted," he sneered, as he flecked the ashes from his cigar.

"So well posted," replied LeMar, "that I have taken the trouble to glance over some Australian memoranda!"

He was playing his few cards as best he dared. If he could trick Grim into believing he knew more of him than he really did he might be able to intimidate him into delaying matters for a little; he might gain time; at least, he might help himself in some way.

But Doctor Grim was far too shrewd to betray any further immediate interest in the subject. Only a taunting laugh greeted LeMar's last thrust, and Doctor Grim mixed himself another docoction. This he drained with the air of a connoisseur, remarking in a polite little aside that his guest's continued refusal of his wine was a distinct disappointment.

Finally he arose with a decisive air and stood facing LeMar in an elegant attitude, and with a devilish little smile curling his lips. LeMar knew that something more than ordinarily fiendish was about to develop, and men-

tally he made ready for whatever shock might be coming.

"Before you die," resumed Grim, renewing the unpleasant emphasis he placed on that phrase each time he used it, "I am going to show you some surprise. I was not aware that you knew anything of my past, but since you do, I suppose that you know I was once quite interested in the art by which you have gained such a professional reputation. It is too bad! The stage is to lose in you one of its very brightest and most promising entertainers. Remember that I say this to you—it shows you I cherish no professional or artistic jealousies. I have some new illusions in this house. They were designed for my patients—the mad people and the people the world and his wife choose to call mad—and some of them are ingenious. If you will come with me, now, into this next room, I shall show you the first of a series of such deceptions. As I have to be rid of you within an hour, I shall show you only this one, I fancy, but you may rest assured this is the chef d'œuvre. What the French call the *mise en scène* is most artistically developed. The atrocities reported to have been committed by the kaiser's soldiers in Belgium and France first suggested the idea to me, and I have given it what I consider to be a most appropriate title—'Kultur'!"

"I am not interested in your illusions," snarled LeMar. "I have heard you too long. My patience is at an end. I warn you that I have not come here unprepared. I demand to see Miss Kellar instantly, and I shall not leave this house until she goes with me!"

Doctor Grim spread wide both hands and bowed in apologizing pantomime.

"I have been frank enough to inform you that I intend to remove you from your mundane activities," he said sweetly. "Now trust my frankness when I tell you that Miss Kellar is just now the subject of this new illusion—this 'Kultur'—and you cannot see her without seeing the illusion. Won't you pass in?"

LeMar studied his face for a moment. He wondered if he were walking into a trap. Certainly, everything pointed that way. Yet, there was something honest in this fiend's calm admission of his own evil; something so honest that LeMar was prompted from within to trust him now.

"Where is this thing?" he asked.

"It is in the next room. Let me be entirely frank with you. I shall give you one hour to watch it. At the end of that time you will be an entirely different man from what you are now. On my honor—and I am jealous of my honor, LeMar—I promise you no harm will come to you until you return to me in this room. I promise that you shall have one hour with Miss Kellar in that room, and that you will not be molested. At the end of that time you will be brought back into this room, and I shall see to it that you trouble me no more. But you will return here exactly as you are now, as free as you are now to work me injury. The only difference will be that you will hate me more than ever. If you have any hopes of overpowering me—but I warn you I am invulnerable—you will have as fair a chance then as now. But I think your presence in the next room will have a distinct psychological effect upon the young lady which will aid me in a very difficult and important matter."

LeMar was certain now that, in this, at least, Grim was not lying. It is a curious situation, when one enemy is ready implicitly to believe another in what may prove such a vital matter as this. Yet the magician could not escape the conviction that it would be better, if he were to go through that door, come what may; even if he were tricked, he might escape and find himself better able than ever to cope with the situation. And, it must not be forgotten, LeMar held a trump card of which Doctor Grim did not dream, and thus he felt secure against even the unknown mysteries of the room into which his host was so anxious that he enter.

And he had promised him an hour alone with Rose Kellar! In one breath the prospect looked hopeless and then filled with boundless possibilities.

An hour! One hour in which to defeat this man in his own fortress, to outwit him, his man Alphonse, and all their crew, to find Rose Kellar and to take her to freedom. The task, indeed, looked hopeless. As Grim stepped to the broad mahogany door at the other end of the room, LeMar watched him with eyes that saw not. Instead, he was thinking as drowning men are said to think, only the magician's mind did not conjure up any visions of his past. No pictures of his boyhood, his family or his early friends came to him now. Only the baffling puzzles of this strange business came to his thoughts. He saw again the accusing face of old man Neck, he heard again the devilish chuckle of his sister, he lived over again the dark uncertainty of those moments in the house of the medium, and the rest of the night flooded over his consciousness and dismayed him. He wondered what Jack would think.

The door swung inward ponderously. Like a courtier, Grim stood at one side, and with a hand put slightly forward indicated to LeMar that he was to pass through.

"Go in and enjoy yourself," said Grim, with an ingratiating smile.

LeMar stepped across the threshold and the door closed behind him. Grim had not come with him. The room was dark—so dark that he could not see.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"KULTUR!"

LEMAR was certain the door had closed behind him. He felt in back of him and his fingers closed over the knob. He turned the knob and pressed with all his might, but he knew before he had tried it that the door would not give. He was locked in.

It was, therefore, an acute shock, when a hand was suddenly placed on his shoulder, *from behind*. The door was closed, there was scarcely two inches of space between its heavy panels and his shoulders, and yet a hand came out of the rear and grasped him with a clenching firmness that betokened great strength. He was pushed downward with impatient force, and to his amazement found that he had simply been hurled violently into a chair. For some mysterious reason it was desired that he sit down, and so specter-like hands placed him, unresisting, in a sitting position.

At first, the magician did not understand this, but he was not long kept in doubt. The chair, which had been immediately in front of him, but invisible because of the darkness, was a massive, wooden affair, and evidently contrived with devilish ingenuity. LeMar rested his hands on the arms and suddenly felt himself caught in a clamp which had risen automatically to bind him. It was as if two other iron arms had closed over his own and gripped him to the chair. At the same moment two bars of steel closed around his waist and locked. He was again a helpless prisoner, secured to this chair, at the will and the scant mercy of Dr. Raven Grim.

LeMar then resigned hope. He was confident the chair in which he sat was some electric invention of the mind of Grim, and that in this he was to be executed without delay. But in this he forgot the promise of Doctor Grim that he was to witness his best and latest illusion—and LeMar did not know that Doctor Grim never broke a promise, except when it was expedient.

As he stared into the darkness the magician suddenly became aware that something was transpiring before his gaze. There was a light growing. Things were becoming more distinct, as if black mists were parting. Indefinite objects were taking form and substance, as the strange light grew more softly beautiful. At last the full setting for Doctor Grim's illusion was displayed.

There were two shining swords, crossed in mid-air, and suspended as if without support. Resting on their broad curved blades was the head of Rose Kellar. Below it, above it and all around it was nothing but space, which momentarily was growing brighter, from the illumination of soft lights which could not be seen.

The face of the girl was drawn, as if with intense suffering. The eyes were closed, the mouth drawn tightly down, as if her pain were great. There was nothing visible but her head, resting on the edges of the swords. To all intents and purposes, she had been decapitated. But the head was alive.

Fascinated at the dreadful horror of the picture which Doctor Grim had prepared for his entertainment, the magician could not, for the first few moments, speak. He watched in dumb wonder the eyes slowly open, and the girl gaze around her in startled fear. Then he found speech.

"Rose!" he cried. "It's I, LeMar!"

His voice echoed with eerie distinctness through the room. It reached her, though he fancied it seemed very faintly. She turned quickly and glanced all around, seeking him out, but not seeing him. Then he realized that she could see him, but that to her he was invisible.

"I am sitting just in front of you—not five feet away," he told her.

"Is it really you—or another torturer?"

It was Rose Kellar speaking, but LeMar would not have known if he had not seen her before him. So changed those sweet tones that had pleased him so well. They were hoarse and shaken now, as if they reflected the broken spirit which sent them forth. It shocked him.

"Really, it is I, little Rose," he hastened to assure her. "And I am here to save you. Take heart!"

"No!" she answered. "You cannot save me. You cannot fight against that unspeakable monster. Be careful what you say. He is listening, and he is so cruel that he will make you pay in suffering for everything you say against him—as he is making me pay now. Try to save yourself, and leave me to fight it out alone."

"Fight out what alone?" cried LeMar.

But she only closed her eyes wearily and was still. LeMar sat there in the dark, determined the situation could be solved, yet seeing no hope of solving it. If she could only tell him what she knew! If he could really have an hour with her, alone—utterly alone—with no listening master criminal to stop her when she had gone too far. Surely she could help him save her, if she could but speak to him unheard.

But only a miracle could make that possible. He was bound hand and foot to a chair, and she was—well, only God and the devil knew what she was bearing. Only a miracle! Then why not a miracle?

The question answered itself. It came as a holy inspiration in that hour of despair, and it filled with exultation the heart of the harassed magician.

"Rose!" he cried sharply, "before you left the theater did you water the geraniums?"

There was a moment of dreadful silence. He wondered if she could understand. The seconds seemed hours, until her answer came:

"No, I did not, because I was too busy answering the correspondence."

"Did you have two lumps of sugar in your coffee at supper, as you insisted you would?"

"Yes, but I did not like the waiter. His mustache was too black!"

LeMar was happy. His hidden meaning language had succeeded. He almost felt like shouting hurrah! Let Grim and his men listen all they cared to—the hour was young yet.

"The lobby was rather crowded when I came up tonight," he continued. "And did you notice that man with a crutch at the box office?"

"He looked like a German spy," answered the girl solemnly.

They talked incessantly. Moment after moment passed, without a pause, without a break, in that long, apparently purposeless, useless, utterly trivial conversation. They talked of everything, as if they were chatting over a dinner-table. They actually laughed. But always they talked; they did not pause, even to catch their breath. They used their hour well.

They had talked of all subjects; they had said nothing to inform the sensitive ears of Doctor Grim and his man Alphonse. Yet when presently the dark mists came again and hid his beloved one from his view; when strange hands came from the darkness and released the irons that bound him to the chair; when he was drawn back to the waiting Doctor Grim, all the mysteries of the night were lifted from his mind.

LeMar *knew* at last. And, knowing, he was all the readier for the battle.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AGAIN—MAGIC AGAINST MAGIC

DR. RAVEN GRIM was standing in the center of the room, his arms folded, a smile of settled triumph on his face. He fairly gloated over the erect, sturdy figure of LeMar, who, released from the scene he had witnessed in the other room, had returned, as Grim had predicted, hating him more than ever.

"We shall parley no more," said Doctor Grim sternly. "By this time your inamorata has been told that you are to die. She believes that if she will break her long silence, a silence we have tried to shatter with the most exquisite tortures, only to fail, that I shall spare your life. In that case I may yet cause her to speak. But that, LeMar, will rest with the future—my immediate business now is with you, and I cannot longer delay. I am going to give you what you most certainly will appreciate—a magical execution!"

"Dr. Raven Grim," LeMar returned, "I beg of you to remember one or two things. Remember that until I saw you in the automobile to-night, the man with the red scar was a total stranger to me, except as I had pictured him in my imagination. Yet I tracked you here. I found you out, despite the best precautions you and your man could take. I have done other things against you, which I do not believe you know.

"Now I warn you! Bring Rose Kellar here to me; send us out into the night unharmed, now, without delay, or the death with which you have so vauntingly threatened me since I came here will overtake you before you are aware. I am not bluffing. This is your last chance."

The blazing fury of the magician's tones, the challenging note in his voice, the undaunted light on his face, his own sureness of himself, nearly stunned the amazed Grim.

"I really believe you think you can accomplish that," he sneered.

But his taunts failed to spur LeMar into losing that coolness, which was now his best weapon.

"It's magic against magic, Doctor Grim," he retorted slowly. "You tell me you have prepared for me a magical execution. I tell you that you shall die by magic, or be overpowered by magic—that you will be subject to my will—within five minutes if you do not accede to my demands!"

With an impatient gesture Doctor Grim turned on his heel and walked to the other side of the room. From out of a corner he wheeled a ponderous wooden cabinet, set on casters. He wheeled this to the center of the room, with that exact professional air assumed by an illusionist in exhibiting one of the famous stage cabinet feats.

"You are going into this cabinet," Grim assured him, as if he were explaining to an audience what was about to happen. "And you are going to disappear. I shall close that cabinet door upon you, and you will never be seen or heard from again. It is a remarkable invention, which you will have ample leisure to study during the process of shuffling off this mortal coil. And I promise you it shall be a painless affair!"

"You fiend!"

"Get in the cabinet," ordered Doctor Grim. His voice had lost its silken texture now; he spoke with the arrogance of a Hun.

"I shall not get in that cabinet. I am waiting for you to bring Rose Kellar to me," returned LeMar patiently.

"Choose!"

Doctor Grim had drawn from his pocket a revolver

which he levelled directly at LeMar's head. He came nearer to him, his eyes dangerous, his mouth set in evil lines, his head bent forward, the very picture of brutal, merciless rage.

"Die one way or the other—choose quick!" he cried.

But LeMar cared nothing for either choice. He had dallied long enough. He had held off until he had his man where he wanted him. They were at the final grips, and the time for him to strike was at hand. He waited no longer.

As if frightened at the sight of the revolver, the magician threw up his hands, an action which brought a leer of scorn to the face of Doctor Grim. As his enemy came nearer, LeMar stood perfectly still, hoping and praying that he would come closer still. He waited, until Grim had paused, and was about to speak again.

Then an extraordinary thing happened.

Doctor Grim settled back a little on his heels, a look of blank astonishment on his face. A queer, dazed look overspread his face as if he were not certain of his bearings, or as if intoxication had suddenly seized him. He put out one foot to steady himself, and his arms spread out weakly, helplessly, in a vain effort to retain his balance. His eyes were rolling, and presently a little fleck of foam showed at each corner of his mouth. For a brief second his eyes came even with LeMar's, and the look of superstitious dread, of drunken terror in them was startling to behold.

Doctor Grim was reeling. He was clutching madly at the air to regain his balance, he was striving desperately to regain his hold upon himself, but he was losing out as second after second ticked away.

The room was in utter silence. There was no attendant near to watch, to spread the alarm.

Doctor Grim himself had said there were times when it were better that no one else be near. The hopelessness of his gaze, now, as he stood there, rolling and momentarily about to fall, showed how he was struggling to speak, and finding that he had no voice, no power to call, no strength to summon assistance, no——

He fell in a heap to the floor. And then LeMar, who, through all that tense three minutes had stood perfectly erect, hands lifted, as if he were mesmerizing the man who had sworn to destroy him, dropped to his side, his face eager and anxious. He rolled the fallen Doctor Grim over to one side and assured himself that his coma was really complete; that he had really gone off into a sleep of which no one could foretell the hour of awakening. It was the result of LeMar's contrivance concealed in his clothes.

Back upon his feet again, LeMar moved around the room with quick, catlike motions, searching for ropes, or something that would aid him in binding his prisoner. To his surprise he found something far better—a pair of new handcuffs, in a cabinet drawer, and a set of heavy leg irons. Probably they had been used, at times, in keeping the inmates of this place quiet, for it must not be forgotten that this was a retreat for the insane.

In less time than it takes to tell, LeMar had these fetters firmly on the wrists and ankles of Dr. Raven Grim. Then he stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, jamming it in chokingly tight, and securing it so tightly that he felt certain Doctor Grim, even if he should regain consciousness, could never work himself free in time to sound the alarm before LeMar and Rose Kellar could get to the street and safety.

But even then, anxious as he was to return to Rose Kellar and set her free, aware as he was that his danger was not yet over, by any means, so long as Grim's servants were near, LeMar was not content to leave him in that position on the floor.

There was the cabinet of death, into which Grim had hoped to place him, still standing, black, gaping, threateningly sinister in the middle of the floor. Why not put him in there? He had said it would mean the end of LeMar, when he was put in there, but that must depend on some hidden spring, some mechanism, which must be touched. Besides, in his present mood, with the memory of what had already been done to Rose Kellar, and what would have been done to him fresh in his heart, LeMar was not inclined to be over-particular in his treatment of Doctor Grim. What he wanted was to secure Doctor Grim in safety until he and Rose Kellar were out into the street, where they could invoke the protection of the law. An instant decided LeMar.

He dragged the heavy, unconscious form across the hardwood floor and lifted it into the cabinet. He did not look to see what was there. He simply threw the body into the cabinet and shut the door. It closed with an ominous crash, and LeMar quickly wheeled the cabinet back to its original resting-place in a far corner.

Then, with the joy of the conqueror in his heart, he bounded across the room and turned the knob of the door through which he had been thrust to witness the illusion called 'Kultur.' He turned the handle, and it gave beneath his grip. The door swung backward, and he rushed into the darkness where Rose Kellar, he knew, was waiting.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ALPHONSE—AND ONE OTHER

THE room in which he had witnessed the illusion called Kultur was as dark as the Stygian cave. LeMar could not see his hand before his face.

He knew the perils of this house. He knew that the diabolical cunning of Doctor Grim might have laid all sorts of pitfalls into which he might tumble while groping about in search of Rose.

"Magic against magic," he repeated to himself grimly. "So far, Doctor Grim, my magic has outwitted yours—and here's where I score again!"

In the darkness, you could not have seen what he did, but if you had been at one of his performances, where this was one of his famous feats, you would not have been any the wiser. In one moment there was total blackness. In the next instant there was flaming light, which lit up the entire room. In LeMar's hand was a bowl, from which a fountain of flames was dancing and leaping, casting a cheerful, warming glow all around. This was the bowl of fire he ordinarily produced in the second part of his entertainment. It had still been hanging from its hiding-place under his coat.

It enabled the magician to see clearly and to gather his bearings. And before him, staring up at him in wide-eyed, dumbfounded amazement, too frightened to cry out, almost too happy to believe, was Rose Kellar. She looked at him as if he were an angel, suddenly come from Heaven. All the apparatus for the illusion which he had been shown had been removed; the room was simply a black dungeon now. Then LeMar saw the real plight of Rose Kellar.

She was seated, with her hands resting on a sort of stock in front of her, with two little sockets, into which her thumbs and had been placed. Clamps had been screwed on these, and it was evident the brave little woman was enduring agonies, but there was no murmur of pain coming between her pale lips. She was happy now; so happy that the tears were streaming down her face at the sight of him.

"I told you I'd come!" he said, as he sat the bowl of fire down on the floor and came over to her. "So this is how they tried to make you tell! Dear little Rose!"

There was a suspicious moisture in his own eyes as he bent low over the viciously fashioned framework, and with strong fingers tugged at the screws and bolts until the cruel clamps were loosened. Then he caught her hands and kissed them, and in that strange scene in the dungeon, with the bowl of magic fire glowing them with strange light, and with phantom shadows dancing all around them, he kissed her, twice, and clasped her close.

"Where is he?" whispered Rose fearfully.

"He's where he will be quiet for a little while longer," answered LeMar, as he put his arm around her. Then, releasing her for a second, he stooped and lifted the bowl

of fire, which was now beginning to die down, the fuel being almost exhausted. "I have him gagged, handcuffed and leg-ironed in a cabinet of death in which he had promised to execute me. How's that?"

His voice was almost gay. Now that Rose Kellar was at his side again he felt as if all dangers were removed; the possibility of interference from any one else in the house worrying him very little. He felt equal to conquer a whole regiment of men like Doctor Grim, and every pressure of Rose Kellar's hand on his arm increased the size of the regiment.

As he came to the door again he fancied that he heard a slight noise in the room where he had left Doctor Grim a prisoner, but he was certain it was impossible for Doctor Grim to have escaped. Yet there was some little forboding expectation of trouble in his breast, as still clasping his assistant tenderly he stepped again into the brilliantly lighted room.

But he was not prepared for the sight that met his gaze. Doctor Grim was not there. But Alphonse, a German-looking individual with a French name, was there. He was standing respectfully in the center of the room, as if waiting for orders. His eyes were on the floor.

In silence LeMar stood in the doorway regarding him. The long quiet soon struck the man as unusual, and he opened his eyes, resting his gaze upon the magician.

"*Gott in himmel!*" he yelled. "Go back! Doctor Greem!"

He whirled about and then ripped from his pockets two weapons. In one hand he clutched a long knife, in the other a revolver.

"Two for two!" he snapped, brandishing the knife threateningly. His evil little face was distorted by an expression of confident power. "Vat a fine business! Vy de h——l don't Doctor Greem come on!"

Swaying, overcome almost at this fresh trial, Rose Kellar leaned heavily on LeMar's arm. But he reassured her in tones in which there was not the slightest tinge of doubt or uncertainty.

"Don't be afraid of this German!" he cried. "Just let go my arm, dear, and stand behind me. He can't hurt you, and he can't hurt me."

Alphonse was dancing back and forth, trying to prevent their escape until his master came, and only too eager to use his weapons if he dared. It was plain LeMar's words had had no effect upon him; he believed the man and woman before him were utterly at his mercy, but he feared the will of his master and would not strike until it became what he considered necessary.

But LeMar was not disposed to wait. What he had done to Doctor Grim he could do to his man-servant. He raised his arms on a level with his shoulder and extended his hands toward the mouthing servant.

But before he could bring to pass what he wished, there was a startling interruption. In the outer hall there was a sound of rending, snapping wood and glass, and then the fall inward of a heavy door.

Immediately afterward a rush of feet resounded through the house as men came rushing down the hall. They pushed open the door and crowded in.

Leading them was a familiar figure. It was Jack Brown, and he had a squad of police with him!

CHAPTER TWENTY

WHAT HAPPENED TO DOCTOR GRIM

"WE'RE here!" cried Jack excitedly, glancing all around, as if expecting to find a roomful of men to subdue.

"Well, we can use you, all right," answered LeMar. "Here, officers! Seize that man!"

With a howl Alphonse darted back toward the door which led into the room of the Kultur illusion. He was half-way across when LeMar, bounding after him, had caught him in an iron grip, and led him whimpering, mouthing and praying back to the little group of policemen. A lieutenant stepped forward with an air of authority and asked LeMar what had happened.

"Lieutenant, you're going to take back to the station-house the biggest feather you ever secured for your cap," replied LeMar. "I've caught you a rare bird—a raven—and this is his cage."

He walked over to the cabinet, which was now back in its corner, and placed one hand on its knob. The lieutenant cleared his throat, reddened and said impatiently:

"I don't get you, Mr. LeMar, but I want to know what's happened here."

But LeMar did not answer him. Instead he quickly drew back his hand from the cabinet, as if he had suddenly been stung, and when he again faced Jack and his blue-coated friends, his face was very grave.

"It's very singular," he said. "It is extraordinary!"

His obscurities were driving them to exasperation. The irate lieutenant repeated his demand. He wanted to know what had happened here. LeMar finally told him enough to satisfy him for the moment.

"The facts are simple," he said, "but it will require some little while to explain all the details. I do not understand them all myself. But the main facts are these. Dr. Raven Grim is a man for whom the governments of many countries would pay a handsome price, just to get him into their criminal courts, but none of them has as great a cause for securing him as the government of the United States. For reasons of his own, Doctor Grim abducted this young lady, who was an assistant in my magical entertainment, and brought her to this place. I followed him here. He set out to kill me, but, by means which it is not now necessary to describe, I overcame him, and placed him for safe-keeping in this cabinet. The most extraordinary thing is that I just burned my hand."

"You are sure of your facts?" asked the lieutenant, ignoring the last remark.

"I can prove them all!" answered LeMar.

The lieutenant then assumed charge of the situation. He ordered two men to make a search of the house, he ordered another to guard the door, and another to watch the terrified Alphonse. For himself he reserved the task of opening the door of the cabinet. He walked up to it confidently and placed his hand on the little ornamental brass knob.

Then he darted back, with a muffled little exclamation of acute pain.

"What in—— My hand is burned almost to the bone!" he complained, nursing it and staring blankly all around.

"I warned you," reminded LeMar. "It is a most extraordinary phenomenon."

"Did you say there was a man in there?" asked the lieutenant, looking seriously at LeMar.

"I handcuffed, and leg-ironed, and gagged Dr. Raven Grim and I put him in that cabinet," replied the magician. "I closed the door and locked it for safe-keeping."

The lieutenant turned to the man who was guarding Alphonse. They all noticed the chalky whiteness of abject fear on the face of this confidant of Doctor Grim. Now he was ghastly in his terror, and his eyes were fixed with an almost hypnotic stare on the cabinet.

"Make that man lead you to where there is an axe," commanded the lieutenant. "Keep the nippers on him so that he won't turn on you. Bring the axe here and break open this cabinet."

In a silence that was oppressive, the rest of them waited, all of them with eyes fixed on the cabinet. What would they find inside? That was the question that agitated them all. Though they knew the villainies of Doctor Grim, though they were fully aware—at least LeMar and Rose were—that he was capable of unspeakable cruelty, that he was a genuine example of a man possessed of an evil spirit, yet they dreaded the opening of the door. Tragedy, they knew, must be behind it—but a tragedy they feared to look upon.

And then, at last, the policeman reappeared, with one hand guarding the steel bracelets on the wrists of his prisoner, the other holding before him a sturdy axe. He set the axe down with a resounding thud and saluted

"Open the cabinet door," commanded the lieutenant.

Another policeman came forward and relieved his companion of the care of Alphonse. But the latter really needed no guarding. He was watching that cabinet door as a damned soul might watch for judgment day. He was shivering, though it was not cold, and beads of icy water stood on his forehead. His color was ashen, and his breath was coming in spasmodic little jerks.

"Gott in himmel!" they heard him whisper. "Break it open! Break it open!"

The policeman raised the axe and swung it with one fierce, mighty blow. There was a crashing sound of breaking wood and the door pitched drunkenly inward. The bluecoat pounded on it mercilessly, until it cracked asunder, and two big pieces of board rattled to the floor.

The cabinet was gaping wide for them to see. They crowded around, breathless, expectant.

But all they saw was vacancy. There was no trace of Dr. Raven Grim—not even his leg irons, or handcuffs remained. He had utterly, completely, totally vanished.

"A magical death!" cried LeMar. "That is what he had promised me!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE PARTING OF THE MISTS

AFTER one has crossed Broadway, not far from Union Square, and has passed by the inviting but altogether artificial entrances of three or four French eating-places, he comes to Brussier's. Every one who has imagination eventually comes there. There are enough artists there on a single night to form a regiment for the Camouflage Department; enough literary men to write the history of the war. They like it because it is not Bohemian. It is just a good place to eat, with an atmosphere altogether its own, altogether unforced, and altogether interesting. Moreover, there are tables so arranged that one may talk without being overheard, and still enjoy the fun of the ensemble. A great place, this Brussier's.

There was a little dinner party of three at Brussier's seven o'clock on the evening of the day on which Dr. Raven Grim finally and totally vanished. It is hardly necessary to add that the three who had thus assembled to break bread together were LeMar, the celebrated magician; his beautiful assistant, and his business manager. But it will be worthy of mention that in spite of the trials and tribulations through which they had passed during the preceding twenty-four hours, they were a very merry, very gay little party. Rose's countenance had lost the worn expression of pain and suffering which LeMar had found upon it when he rescued her, and the magician himself was as happy as a boy off on a picnic. It is needless to depict the mood of Mr. Jack Brown. He never changed.

When all the courses had been served, when Jack had insisted on lighting one of his pet Turkish abominations and LeMar was puffing contentedly on a small cigar, the real object of the little gathering bobbed uppermost in the minds of those seated around the table. It was Jack who broke the silence.

"Come on!" he said. "Let's loosen up and ask each other questions."

"I do not think we shall have to ask so many questions," answered LeMar. "While you two have been refreshing yourselves with well-earned sleep, I have been doing a little more investigating work with very interesting results. Rose, as you know, I have asked you a great many questions, and, Jack, I have asked you quite a few. I think I now have this abominable business quite clear in my head."

"Then you explain it," suggested Rose, and Jack thoroughly agreed. Accordingly LeMar began:

"We must go back quite a bit, in order to understand the checkered career of Dr. Raven Grim, and the reasons which led up to the sad occurrences of the last few hours. Raven Grim was not his real name—it was a fanciful name which he assumed himself, and which, while fantastic, was curiously suggestive of his character. Doctor Grim's real name was Harris—Brace Harris—and he was born in Australia, of a very fine stock. In his youth, he was sent back to England, where he received a magnificent education, carrying off two or three insignificant honors at Oxford. Then he returned to Australia, and drifted down the stream, until finally he became lost in the wilds of that continent.

"The sensational exploits of Brace Harris, ten years ago, you will recall, if you read the newspaper accounts at that time. He was one of the most daring outlaws the Anzacs ever knew, and he was never caught. But things were getting too hot for him, and he had to get out. Now here is where a curious feature enters into the man's history. Like many another college man, he had taken up a hobby while in England, and in his case the hobby happened to be magic. Probably he had seen Devant or Maskelyne in Egyptian Hall in London. Anyway, he was much interested in the subject, and, as he always did, he made himself a master of it before he was finished.

"This knowledge of the art of mystic entertaining he utilized in order to escape from Australia. There was a magician there, who had come from England, and who was about to retun. Harris, or Grim, waylaid the troupe in its wagon, which was their means of transportation inland, and killed the outfit. Then he and two of his men, one of whom was Alphonse, from which I gleaned this information, disguised themselves as best they could, drove to a seaport, and using faked credentials managed to get out of the country.

"That was how it came to pass that Dr. Raven Grim, the celebrated illusionist, suddenly startled the theatrical firmament of the United States. When he reached this country, he realized his salvation from arrest depended for a year or so, at least, on his emerging into the personality of another man. So he, Harris, the bandit, created Dr. Raven Grim, and made a trans-continental tour of the United States.

"But he was not slated so easily to succeed. Somehow, some one in authority in Australia, who was on a visit to this country, or some agent, or in some other way—Alphonse, the German with a French name, is not quite sure—recognized the magician, and started machinery to trap him. It of course would be an international complication, and he had to work slow. But meanwhile Dr. Raven Grim worked fast.

"One night he disappeared, taking Alphonse with him. All his apparatus and paraphernalia were left in Kansas City, where a kindly physician much interested in magic sold them off and gave the money to charity. But Dr. Raven Grim and his man Alphonse had passed utterly off the face of the earth.

"Now what Dr. Raven Grim did at that time is an example of his own superhuman skill and foresight. He had tried the trick of emerging into another personality, and it had failed him. Now he went that trick one better. He emerged into two personalities, and he did it with masterly skill. As Doctor Raven, he opened a sanitarium for nervous wrecks; as old man Neck, he opened a bogus fortune-telling establishment in the suburbs From one place to the other he passed in an automobile, playing the part of client or patient or dupe in transit. It was——"

"Wait a minute!" pleaded Jack, with widening eyes. "Do you mean to tell me that Dr. Raven Grim and old man Neck were the same?"

"Exactly," smiled LeMar. "I had guessed that long ago."

"Well, who was that infernal old sister of his—the one with the diabolical chuckle?"

"Alphonse!"

Jack sat straight up in his chair, looked from LeMar to Rose for a moment, and then lifted his glass.

"Here's how," he said. "Forgive me, but I need refreshment."

Then LeMar proceeded:

"These two agencies which Doctor Grim now opened

were not chosen at random. They had long been planned; indeed, arrangements for both places had been completed; the discovery by the Australian merely hastened matters. They were designed to further certain schemes which Doctor Grim and his man Alphonse were fostering. Alphonse, you see, is really a well-educated German, and he has been in the confidence of the German intelligence office for a long time. Coming to America with Doctor Grim at a time when the United States was verging on war with this country, he saw his opportunity, and suggested to Doctor Grim that they place themselves at the disposal of the kaiser.

"To this Doctor Grim readily agreed. His plans were elaborate, but they had, too, the virture of simplicity. From his clients who were taking treatment for nerves, and from superstitious people who came to get their fortune told, they could glean bits of information that would be exceedingly valuable to the Imperial Government—may it be blasted to smithereens! Such a spy system is, in fact, in general operation throughout the United States at the present moment, and the agents of the Department of Justice are busy tracking them now.

"It is here, my friends, that Miss Kellar enters on the scene. She answered an advertisement, and found that old Neck needed an assistant. The work did not strike her as being entirely as honorable as she could wish, for it consisted mostly in rummaging through the coat pockets of old man Neck's clients' coats, which they entrusted to her before they entered the seance chamber. The information she could glean from what she found in their pockets, she wrote on a slip of paper and slipped secretly to the old man, who, a little while later, retailed it as inspired messages to the sitters. But she does not mind admitting that she and her sister, Madeline, were up against it, and the work appealed to her love for the odd, the unusual and the adventurous.

"One day, however, something happened. An army officer came in and did a very indiscreet thing. He had in his pockets a secret formula for a new trench gas which was about to be introduced by the United States Government, and he had an engagement with another officer to overlook the situation with him. Finding an hour hanging heavy on his hands, he had wandered around the neighborhood until he came to Neck's place, and being curious after reading the sign, he went in. The formula was in his coat pocket, and he gave that coat to Rose.

"She sent the information to Neck that a gas formula was in the officer's pocket. The medium became tremendously excited, and rushed out into the hall where she was, demanding to know the secret. Being a patriotic girl, and knowing the care with which such matters are guarded by the government, she refused to tell him, for in his eyes she had read there was more than ordinary interest. Of course, the kaiser and his slaves would have made a man a millionaire to possess such a secret. Neck, or Harris, or Grim, or whatever you choose to call him, rushed at the officer's coat himself, upon which Rose screamed for help, and the officer got out in time to prevent Neck from going through his clothes. Rose, fearing the old man's wrath, for his eyes by this time were murderous, asked the officer's protection, and he led her from the house.

"Being a girl more than ordinarily wise, she did exactly what Neck, or Grim, would have done under the circumstances. She disappeared. The officer took her to her boarding-house, where she and her sister Madeline lived alone, got her sister, and moved to a distant suburb immediately. Fortunately for them, they were not discovered, though Grim, you may be sure, sought for them diligently.

"Meanwhile, she answered an advertisement in the paper which I had inserted, and so I secured her two weeks before my show opened. She always came veiled to the theater and went away the same, to avoid detection in the street. However, she feared that something might happen, and so she had always taught her sister, day by day, what I had taught her. Several times her sister accompanied her to the theater, sitting in the dark at the back of the house. Rose did this, because she did not want me to lose out—it was an evidence of what a wonderful girl she really is!"

Here LeMar gazed fondly at the beautiful girl, and Jack lit another Turkish cigarette, begging meanwhile that LeMar go ahead.

"Rose had hoped," the magician continued, "that by traveling with my show she would be safe from Doctor Grim, or Neck, as he had been known to her. But she reckoned without the knowledge that Grim himself had been a magician. It was entirely a natural thing for Doctor Grim (in the rôle of old man Neck) to stop in at this theater, when our photographs were put on display in the lobby. And in looking at them, he saw Rose's picture, instantly recognizing it.

"Now Doctor Grim had made up his mind to get the secret of that formula, and he believed that if he could abduct Rose and get her to his mad-house he could force her, by tortures and threats, to divulge it. She had admitted to him that she knew it, but would not give it up. Accordingly, he laid his plans for the kidnaping.

"That was how it came to pass that old man Neck got behind the scenes of the Globe Theater, on our opening night, after heavily bribing the doorman. His purpose was to get the lay of the land. The doorman had been well paid to fix the preliminaries, the most important of which was the placing of a glass of drugged water in the dressing-room of Miss Kellar.

"But here again Doctor Grim had not counted on chance, which in a number of instances had befriended him, but which had also played against him. Rose had seen him when he was buying a ticket at the box office, but he did not recognize her because of her veil. She was certain he would discover her when she appeared on the stage.

"That was the reason she did not want to go on that night. She had gotten in touch with her sister by phone, and the latter was hurrying to the theater, for Rose had determined not to go on this night, when she knew Doctor Grim would be in the audience. She planned to return the next night and say that she had been ill.

"She escaped by passing through the private boxes, into the lobby and then into the street. By a prearranged plan she was to wait in a closed taxicab outside the theater until her sister came out. Her sister Madeline had promised to explain all that could be explained to me, as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

"All this was carried out, as had been scheduled, with this important difference—that Madeline Kellar drank the drugged water which had been placed there for her sister. Its effect was not instantaneous, but gradual. She was able to get through the levitation, but when she was taken into my dressing-room and we questioned her, Jack, as you well remember, she found that her speech and hearing were affected, and presently she was in a complete stupor.

"Then we got an ambulance and took her to the hospital. From her position in the taxicab, Rose had also seen her sister carried out, and so she followed us to the hospital. But when she saw us emerge again, and heard us talking of what had happened, she realized it would be better for her to follow us, rather than show herself at the hospital, where Grim might appear at any moment.

"There her reasoning was false and unfortunate. As a matter of fact, Grim, who was in the theater, and who had had all his plans laid for a speedy and sensational abduction, with the aid of some assistants, had observed the substitution, and he was following Jack and myself. He believed we had made the change deliberately, and that we would lead him to Rose.

"When we got to the house of the Necks, Rose began to get frightened. Knowing, from some experiences, the kind of man Neck was, she wanted to call us off, so that the matter might be dropped, and we might suffer. She feared if we stirred things up it would only make matters worse. So, when she saw us standing on the porch, she slipped around the back way, an entrance she had used when working in the medium's parlor, and unlocked the door. Knowing her way so well, she could get around in the

rickety old house with her eyes shut, and so she did not mind the darkness. She hastily scribbled the note, and standing on a shed outside the upper stairway, thrust the note into our hands.

"Then a stunning surprise awaited her. Doctor Grim, who had followed us, had seen her as she entered his house, and that was exactly what he had come for. He clapped his hand over her mouth, thrust her into his machine which he had been tracking us in, and then proceeded to make her fast.

"While he was thus engaged, we emerged to the street and walked down to the corner. We were just in time to be there when Grim's machine turned the curb, and Jack, luckily, was whistling our manipulation waltz just at that second. The sound of this gave Rose a superhuman strength and courage, and she managed to free herself and open the door. She had almost escaped, when the machine darted off, under Alphonse's skillful guiding.

"Then, as you know, we raced after the machine, but when we got in, it was empty, except for Doctor Grim. It was this that gave me my first clue as to the man's identity. His face was hauntingly familiar, but I could not place him. But when I found the girl gone, though staggered for the second, I speedily solved that riddle, and it helped me win out finally.

"What Grim had done had been simply to have the interior of his automobile fitted up like the illusion known to magicians as the appearing palanquin. It is an illusion of angles, in which you have space enough to conceal a human body, although you appear not to. Rose was really under the seat, although when I made a hasty examination I thought I was looking at empty space. She was behind a mirror there.

"Then Alphonse put the butt of a revolver through the little window over our heads and knocked us both senseless. Grim, with his really grim sense of humor, took us back to our hotel, and wrote that warning message on the bell. When I came to, I was sure Nagen would help me place him, and I was also sure we would be watched, and so on the double chance, Jack and I set out. We went to Nagen's house and completed our identification of Dr. Raven Grim. Then we went out, turned the trick on Alphonse, who had been trailing us, through Jack's operation. But here Jack turned a trick on me. His orders were to take an L car downtown, go to his hotel and go to bed.

"Instead of doing that, he went up on the L platform, let the next train go by, and then risked his foolish life by crossing those trestles. He got to the other side, where the uptown trains stop, and went down, emerging on the other side of Third avenue. I followed Alphonse, and Jack, all unknown to me, followed both of us. Jack saw me go up and ring Grim's doorbell, and that was how he took matters into his own hands and brought a raiding party to the rescue.

"There is little left to explain, except how I managed to outwit the odious Doctor Grim in our final grapple. He had invented a most diabolical thing. That cabinet was a nest of wires, connected with a special battery, worth thousands of dollars. By closing those doors, the thing was hermetically sealed, and enormous heat created, which practically disintegrated whatever was there. It was his dream to produce a real vanishing illusion, and in this he succeeded, though he really destroyed whatever he vanished. That was how he instantly planned to kill me, as soon as I crossed his threshold.

"But I was armed with a more innocent, yet equally as potent a weapon. And yet it was a very simple one. You remember my balloons from the hat illusion. At the beginning of my second part I borrow a gentleman's hat. I show it empty, and then I produce from it a dozen toy balloons, inflated, and they float over the heads of the spectators with a very charming effect. Now this is accomplished by having a rubber reservoir of gas at the small of the back, under the coat, connected with a tube running down the right arm. An ingenious small appliance controls this flow of gas. The balloons in a small form, uninflated, are secretly introduced into the hat, and then the mouth of the tube placed against the opening. They are thus inflated, and secured with bands, and produced, one after the other. I had this apparatus in place before we left the hotel.

"Now I have discovered that this gas is very poisonous, if inhaled. It produces unconsciousness almost instantly. And I knew, with such a gas, I could knock Doctor Grim senseless before he knew what I was doing. That is exactly what I managed to do, and then, I am sorry to say, I sent him to the very fate he had prepared for me."

Rose shuddered at the memory, and they quickly turned the conversation toward brighter topics. They had much to talk about, and soon the horrors of Doctor Grim and his mysteries were forgotten in making their plans for the future—plans in which a wedding figured conspicuously.

A great story by a great author coming in our next number. Watch for it!

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Crittenden Marriott
14 CASE 1,414, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Chas. F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, By Edith Sessions Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d St., New York.

THE RINGLESS HANDS

By DAISY KESSLER BIERMANN

A SLENDER, erect figure whose weight of jewels seemed almost a burden, notwithstanding the arrow-like straightness of her young body, sat close against the railed edge of the box, facing the audience in the pit.

My own seat was just below, and the resplendent display of gems—hung in necklaces, in pendants, in the long swinging ear ornaments now so fashionable; set in brooches, in bracelets, and an encrusted diadem crowning her hair—fairly forced itself upon my attention.

The girl leaned forward, placing both hands upon the railing before her, and I was startled. The slim, brown hands were ringless.

No radiant wealth clothed them, no flashing its fires of emerald, ruby and sapphire, its mighty purity of pearls, its crowning white blaze of diamonds. Not even a chaste circlet of gold broke the slender lines of their nudity. Overloaded to the point of doubtful taste through every other opportunity for bedeckment, the most natural point for display of adornment, the commonest and most accepted through all time—her hands—almost shocked with a sense of modesty, so stripped and naked they appeared.

An erect figure, whose jewels seemed almost a burden, sat close against the edge of the box.

My first startled wonder grew to a lively curiosity as my gaze wandered from those two bare hands, up through the maze of dancing brilliancy to her face, seeking a possible explanation. As much as the contents of a book can be read through the covers did I grasp an inkling of the girl's character through the impassive lines of her face. I simply knew it was no inadvertence of taste which caused the peculiar scheme of adornment with its seeming remissness at the focal point. It was intended to be so. In a mask-like countenance whereon the marks usually to be read by the astute were carefully obliterated, one thing was written large—decisiveness of a force strongly compelling. Whatsoever was the motive, there certainly was one.

I am a dilettante seeked for the unusual, in sensation or diversion, and I have the leisure to pursue my hobby. Here was the unusual thrust upon me. I accepted the challenge.

The girl's gaze, passing idly over the audience, swept across my face. For an instant her eyes caught mine fully. A gray amber light of leaping life within seemed to clash with my frankly curious gaze, in a living message. There was a message there. It reached me surely. But whatever it was, it might as well have been written in cipher code on yellow paper. I sought openly for its repetition during the evening, but though her wandering gaze passed my way several times, her eyes were a gray blank. The amber light was dead.

But the night was yet young. I was standing under the blue arc glare at the lobby entrance, idly watching the throng of pleasure-seekers pouring from the theater, the last strains of the opera blending in their minds with anticipative visions of hot birds and cold bottles. The stream flashed and rippled past me and melted into the broader current of Broadway's night life. I did not note that one soft perfumed radiant wavelet detached itself from the dancing flood of color and paused beside me, until I felt a quick touch on my sleeve.

The girl of the jewels stood there, and in the set contour of her face the gray eyes were afire with the amber glow I had before caught in a flashing gleam. She spoke in a low, incisive voice.

"What I am doing now is of a piece with what I have been doing."

"Yes?" I quickly leaped to the conclusion that the best game was a waiting one, and I covered my confusion of natural emotions at the encounter with what impassivity I could muster.

"Of course you don't understand. I don't expect it," she continued. It was to be a good game, my instinct for the unusual assured me. I settled myself to the study of its development. A poised composure and a certain more indefinable quality in her demeanor placed the girl above the usual pretty woman who might speak to you in a theater lobby after the play. I suggested tentatively: "Supper? You have something to say to me. Shall we discuss it at Sherry's?"

She glanced quickly over her shoulder.

"He'll think I've missed him and gone home. Yes, I'll go"; she took a hurried little step forward and then

checked herself, looking at me keenly. "I'll go." She repeated it more slowly. "You can understand."

It was a retired little table that she chose, well away from the windows, and partly hidden by a large Japanese screen. The setting became her, and, her fur and satin wrap thrown back, the wealth of jewels gleamed and smoldered in the subdued light, almost dimmed by her shining eyes now vividly alight with some deeply stirring purpose. She began without preamble.

"These jewels—that is what you are interested in, is it not? I am interested in them also." She paused and then, her tone breaking from the leash of her restraint. "I want them. I must have them. I *shall* have them!"

"Well, you have them," I suggested. Her eyes were opened wide staring at me fixedly.

"Yes, I have them." She just breathed the words, repeating mechanically. "Listen," she leaned forward, "I will tell you the whole thing, and maybe you will help me. Yes, I think you will."

The confidence of a strange and beautiful woman is an appealing thing to the average man. I was of New York, bred in the cynicism of the life that comes after the theater closes; sated with and yet craving the unusual. Her words reached me with an effect that was decidedly mixed.

With her the Rubicon seemed to have been crossed. She leaned back in her chair with a little sigh and her eyes half-closed as with a calm deliberation she appeared to be arranging her subject matter in orderly form before presenting it. I confess I awaited with a stir of eagerness in my blood. What whimsical or tragic or comic revelation would this girl make in the plea for jewels that to all appearance were her own? But I was not to know—just then. A passer chose this moment to pause beside our table.

"I thought so," his voice came pleasantly. "I thought I would find my ward hereabouts. It is a favorite place." He turned to me in deprecatory explanation.

Here was more sensation. I sat up mentally, and was extremely busy for the next few moments observing the two. The girl sat as she was without stirring a muscle. The man looked down on her, the smile that matched his tone flickering about his mouth corners. The expression of his eyes was sufficiently curious to fasten my attention. They were stiletto-like in their piercing study of the beautiful drooping figure. The girl's slim brown hands came slowly from her lap, where they had lain in an easy clasp, and spread in a defenseless nudity that was almost ostentatious, as her finger-tips touched the white cloth. She leaned forward as if to rise, and slightly tilted her head, though her eyes remained downcast.

"You wish to go?"

Every atom of animation was gone. It was an automaton to whom I did not exist which asked the question.

"I think so," he smiled. But to him at least I existed. He continued, turning to me pleasantly: "Our little differences appear to be interesting you. Will you come with us?"

"I confess it, and, thank you, I will." Did a flicker of downcast lids reward me? I took the chance. It was a night of lucky chances. I felt the exhilaration of a boy keen on the scent of an adventure.

Behold me, then, bound downtown in an after-midnight ride in a taxi with two strangers. The unknown destination and my silent companions furnished the latest sensation in a night of sensations. The beautiful woman sat in a rigid silence, in the half light her unusual face showing a repose that was marble-like. Opposite sat the middle-aged man in an easy, half-mocking silence, a play of moods strongly savoring of enjoyment lighting his keenly observant face.

Finally we stopped before the porticoed entrance of one of the tall apartment houses which from the north side of Washington Square face superciliously their more frankly tenement brothers of the squalid south side.

In silence we passed through the red plush corridor, and in equal silence the elevator shot us up to somewhere near the region of the fifth or sixth floor. When we were well within a softly lighted, comfortably appointed bachelor apartment, there settled upon us all a brief psychological moment of mutual self-consciousness. The owner of the apartments turned quickly with a light laugh and, pressing a button somewhere, flooded the place with a brilliant white light. The girl's figure leaped to flashing life as she slowly removed the satin wrap. The man, approaching, half-circled about her, his eyes gloating in the spectacle. He looked at me.

"A pretty sight, is it not—as well as a curious one to you?"

My antipathy was taking a definite form, and something of it must have come into my face, for he added quickly, his expression again cool, keen and aloof:

"I must unriddle this riddle for you, I see. First we will be rid of this young person, who already understands enough."

He stepped toward her as she stood proudly erect, then paused as if in involuntary admiration.

"She has the style and the carriage to bring them out, too, hasn't she? I wonder how she gets it; six dollars a week in a department store!"

The girl flushed and blanched, but never moved a muscle as he slowly stripped from her every piece of ornamentation, every last small pin and pendant, commenting caustically the while. My blood grew hot for the woman, so stonily enduring. The crowning contumely came when he stepped back and drew from his pocket a roll of bills, offering one to her almost contemptuously, and saying as he turned his back in dismissal:

"To-morrow at the same time. It will be opera again."

She took the money with the same hardly achieved rigid calm with which she had endured the denuding of her figure of its glittering plumage. For the first time she looked at me.

"I shall see you again?"

Her voice was low, but firm and clear. She seemed to read her answer in my face, for she continued:

"At the Broadway Emporium then; 'gloves and notions.'"

The man's back was turned. His interest in her was gone, and he was idly sorting the jewels into little boxes and caskets standing open on the table. As the door closed he turned sharply, with a quick gesture.

"Be seated, sir. Everything that I do or say in regard to that young woman is premeditated. It is part of the working out of a system whose scope extends far beyond your wildest speculations, and it has a rock bottom of sanity which probably your speculations have not."

As I seated myself he also stretched himself comfortably in a commodious leather arm-chair by the table, and touching the same hidden button, the room was again dimmed to the mellow shaded softness that had greeted our arrival.

"Understand me," he continued, lighting a cigarette and proffering the case, "there is not one reason in the world why I should tell you a word of this, but I rather fancy seeing how you take to the idea, since she has brought you into it. It is an experimental notion of my own. I am, you might say, a 'mental vivisectionist.' Sounds a bit ghastly?" He smiled gently, and I replied with a startled interest:

"Rather; it sounds a bit obscure."

He nodded.

"It does. You have of course noted the recent agitation among the more rabid philanthropists and publications in regard to the mimimum wage for women, the oppression and consequent downfall of the working girl, and so on. All this working girl tragedy is attributed to pressure of environment, industrial conditions—anything but her own character, her own little subtly working mental processes. So! The thing began to interest me. I take it you are a dilettante of your type. I am also one—of my type. This heap of jewels here is luxury in the concrete. These young, exceedingly plastic minds, steeped in the recourses and the necessities of six dollars a week in a department store or lower and more fluctuating wages in a factory, would be necessarily affected by luxury in the concrete and the implied broader luxury their proximity would conjure up. But how? This mind would grasp the situation in a definite form. Just how?" The man's half-closed eyes glinted with a keen cunning as he continued his weird analysis.

"This young woman is my present subject now; I noted her as she crossed Washington Square to her work. She has unusual strength of character in her face. The usual thing would not tempt her, even in the harassing grind of her six dollars per economies—a grind that would be especially irksome to a girl of her potentialities. My proposition to her was a purely business one. I told her of my rare collection of jewels. I let her see my intense pride in them. I revealed to her my inspiration of finding some trustworthy young person who could wear them with becomingness, and who so arrayed would at the opera, the theater and the restaurant, under my escort, allow me the pleasure of displaying my beloved treasures to the world. For how else can enjoyment come but by having your fortune recognized by the world. Clever notion, eh? And quite true, too.

"I have probed and watched her mental processes as a vivisectionist watches each throb and manifestation under his investigating knife. Did you note the sensitive curve of her lips, the pouting fulness of the lower one? She can appreciate luxury, and she does. Each evening she bedecks herself, lingeringly, before the mirror. Then, afterward, with her head and heart singing with splendid music, the heroic, heady sentiments of grand opera, her whole being glowing with warmth and life, I rudely snatch them from her, and she goes back to the six by eight hall bedroom. And I believe it is moving her." He leaned forward eagerly and his narrowed eyes were almost insanely earnest. "You saw, to-night, she slipped away. It was most interesting. I have not broken her, though; there is a startling resilience. A study in shop girls is of baffling fascination." He seemed positively to gloat over his self-conceived problem.

"One little puzzle has given the development of this test vivisection of mine a peculiar zest. This girl, so repressed, so enduring, and yet so charmed with her borrowed finery, strikes one strongly decisive note. She will not wear the rings, and she will not give a reason. I cannot probe it from her. It adds worlds to the interest of the analysis. They are creatures of contrasts. But right now she is planning to steal these jewels—you'll see if I am not correct in my statement!"

I could only look at the man with his flickering half-smile. What quirk of neurotic morbidness could give him enjoyment in this thing was beyond me, but in one of his deductions he had hit the nail—she was planning to steal the jewels. For the hairbreadth of a second I wavered. No, let him guard his precious treasures himself, but at the same time I would warn the girl to attempt no such foolish action as trying to steal them under the eyes of this lynx-eyed cynic. As he preceded me to the door, he said with a light laugh:

"In a word, I am the modern edition of Diogenes, looking for an honest woman; I hope at another time to tell you the result."

That night my dreams were troubled with a vampire thing which hovered over a defiant enigma—a woman enigma with amber gray eyes which held and baffled the threatening monster. Instead of my pursuing the unusual it seemed to be pursuing me, and not fancying nightmares, I early sought the Emporium to get the thing out of my mind.

At the "gloves and notions" I was approached by a blonde-tressed young woman evidently attracted by my uncertain wandering gaze.

"I guess you're lookin' for Miss Smith. She ain't workin' here no more, but she left this for you."

"This" was a folded note, which I perused under the curious eyes of the girl. It consisted of an address, and the penciled line, "Come to see me." The place was down in "Greenwich Village," that Bohemian quarter of New York haunted by artist and writer folk, the devotees of cult and culture. Rather odd headquarters for a shop girl.

An hour later I was exploring the devious byways of the old quarter, and had located the clean little asphalt paved court which contained the address. I lifted the old-fashioned knocker that ornamented the barn-like door, and so quickly that I knew I was expected it slid back, and outlined against a shadowy dimness stood the girl. She extended a frank hand.

"I was sure you would come," she said, a vibrant note marking in her voice a strange contrast to last night's repression. "I am sharing Freda Hoffman's place while I am here; the sculptor, you know. Don't be afraid of the 'shapes.'" She nodded toward the looming figures of gray clay swathed in wet cloths. "Let us go upstairs to talk. It is more cheerful."

We climbed a narrow, steep little flight of stairs and stepped into a sunshine-flooded den, bizarre and picturesque with the foraged furnishings of the studio apartment.

"Yes, it was a barn once," she replied, as my interested eyes went to the pulley-hung door which stood wide open to let the morning light pour into the room. "Many of the most charming little nooks down here were at one time. Now, let's talk.

"I'm not going to keep you long, for I will be busy today, and, also, you must not be bored. You like puzzles, don't you, and I am a good one. So is that man." She became at once serious. "What he told you last night must have been interesting. I think what I am about to tell you may be, also. I couldn't make him out first, but I am understanding the quality of his mentality now. Such persons ought not to be at large, and if I cannot cage him, I can at least pull his teeth, which I intend to do to-night.

"I am studying the shop girl, too. But I want to put her in a book; not through a specially prepared hades such as this degenerate schemer. He is not the only student in this little game. I rather think I shall put him in the book, too. Isn't he rich material, though? You see, I do understand him pretty well, though he has not made me a confidant, as he probably did you. It is a part of my business training. Look for him in next year's 'best seller.'"

With all her earnestness a bubbling flash of humor played through her talk and was mirrowed in her mobile face.

"And now the jewels. I was serious last night—oh,

dead serious. And that's the kernel of our acquaintance. When you noted my hands last night I knew you were the man. That was my idea in not wearing rings. A man who observed the contrast would have intelligent alertness. A man whose interest would carry him farther would have the daring and curiosity to help me. I must have them because he is a devil, and the next girl he will ruin with his temptations and his neurotic investigations. I owe it to these poor girls to put it beyond the power of his malignancy."

I then and there acknowledged the possibility of that next year's "best seller."

"Will you do just two things for me?" And before I answered I knew I would. "Will you be at the opera tonight, and at ten o'clock send an usher to our box with an urgent inquiry for Mr. Chester? You need not see him when he comes out. Just don't be there. And will you please come to the Emporium to-morrow morning again? There will be a message for you. That is all. That is simple, isn't it?"

I said it was and I would; and until I was out of the studio and well on my way through the courts and alleys of Greenwich Village, it never occurred to me that I had gone there especially to warn her not to attempt the jewel theft.

That I attended the opera that night goes without saying. While *Faust* and *Marguerite* supplicated and hesitated in vocal ecstasies, I, too, was in two minds, as I had been through the day. The girl was there, remote and shimmering in her box; the man hovered a black-and-white shadow in the background. As of course I knew they would, along about ten o'clock my legs carried me to the foyer. My voice also did the bidding of this very original young woman and sent the message, and then I remembered her final words, "Just don't be there," and I wasn't. From my place in the crowded audience my eyes again sought the box. It was empty.

You may believe I was not long in hunting up the "gloves and notions" at the Emporium the next morning.

The fair one of the tresses was watching for me evidently. She met me with the cordially recognizing "I have met you before" smile, and readjusting a loosened hairpin with one hand, reached toward me across the counter with the other. It held a large square envelope.

"Miss Smith left this for you. She came in to say good-by." Her smile was inviting of further conversation and possibly revelation, but I made short work of leaving the stale morning chill of the department store for the crisp freshness outside. I was not unrewarded for my eager anticipation. Inside the envelope was another, unsealed, addressed to the experimenter in feminine foibles and frailty, and beside it a folded note for myself.

"Fellow Philanthropist," it ran. "Everything worked like a charm. The taxi was there, and now the tiger's teeth are pulled, and he will crunch no more maidens' bones. He will never see me or the jewels again. The jewels are at the bottom of the North River, and I have returned whence I came. This I have conveyed in the enclosed note, which you will do me a final kindness by giving to him. Have no compunctions, as I have none. We have both found what we sought—I, material; you, the diversion of novelty. Incidentally we have been instruments of salvation. A glittering stone and a dull one have the same weight with Nature and with God. Why not with us?

"Across the bottom of the page was added, 'Watch for the next 'best seller.'"

Emotions mingled, to say milled about in my head as I took the nearest route for Washington Square and the eccentric investigator. I am certain I delivered the enclosed envelope awkwardly, shamefacedly, and, above all, apprehensively. He smiled slyly at my confusion.

"As a messenger you are evidently a novice, my dear sir. It is in connection, I presume, with the young lady of our mutual interest."

He perused the letter with a thoughtful seriousness.

"I was sure she would ask assistance. That proves one of my principal points; their fundamental weakness and dependence. They cannot originate or carry a scheme to consummation unaided. Always the clinging vine, the parasitic growth."

The familiar flickering half-smile passed across his face as he tapped the letter. "But, you know, the jewels—they were paste."

Word for word, this magazine contains more condensed reading matter than any similar publication on the news-stands.

THINKS FOUR MYSTIC

FOUR is a mystic figure in the life of Aldan V. Carter of Ellsworth, Mo., who believes that he has had "four of a kind" in his life more than any other man. Among the items he enumerates are these:

Four wives—in sequence, of course.

Four daughters dead (four living) and four sons.

The four daughters are married, the four sons are not married.

The fourth son is by the fourth wife.

There are four granddaughters and four grandsons.

He is one of four brothers.

His four wives came from four different towns and he is as much older than his fourth wife as four times are plus four.

He was born on a farm four miles from the village and he has always made a practise of rising at 4 a. m.

OLD ROMAN CEMENT

TWENTY square feet of Roman wall in England was demolished not so long ago by a natural movement of the soil. An accident of this kind seems to be the only thing that in the natural course of events can readily damage a Roman wall, of which there are several hundred miles still standing in England.

The secret of their permanence is the cement. We do not know its composition. When some part of such a wall has to be dislodged it is necessary to use dynamite.

All that we know of Roman cement is that pounded tile forms a considerable element in it. For the rest, Roman walls were built with stone and tile from a cement bottom.

The finest specimen in England is the wall that crosses Northumberland from about Newcastle to Carlisle, keeping along the ridges of a series of small hills that fall sheer to the north. The facing of this wall is still in admirable preservation in most parts, and where the hewn stone has broken away one can see the interior mass of rubble and cement.

One may practically say that Roman walls are absolutely enduring except for the slipping of the subsoil. Nothing touches the cement; it is harder than the stone itself as a rule. But when the subsoil becomes moist and loosens, disasters to the walls are natural accidents.

THE PASSAGE INVISIBLE

By C. T. JORDAN

"BUT you've got to make an exception in this case——"

"It's strictly contrary to our agreement," interrupted La Delle with a frown.

"Agreement or no agreement," half-threatened young Channing Wheeler, of headquarters, "you must concede this favor. If you don't——"

"Oh, if you put it that way, Channing, bring her in. But I don't like to do it. I don't wish my affiliation with the department suspected by outsiders."

Wheeler did not wait to hear more. He was outside La Delle's reception room and down the stairs in little more than no time. When he returned he was accompanied by a good-looking young lady, fair of face, trimly dressed, perhaps twenty years of age.

He looked about the room in surprise. The huge gazing crystal which had stood in a corner had vanished, as had all paraphernalia which might give away the nature of La Delle's profession.

"Miss Boone, this is Mr. La Delle, the only man I know of who can help you."

Cedric La Delle turned upon the young woman a face that was broad of forehead. His hair—what there was left of it—was of the fifty-year-old shade of grayish brown, and his eyes seemed the size of butter-dishes when viewed through the powerful lenses of his spectacles, whose bows rested behind ears which were well formed and set low down—so low that they seemed to sprout from his neck. Nature had surely left ample room for brains.

But the use to which he put his brains was a perverted one—almost. He was a scientific humbug. He thrived on the superstitions of the foolish. His one redeeming quality was a necessity; he had to pay for his police protection. Not with money, but with the proper employment of the contents of his dome, was this secured. Whenever headquarters was perplexed La Delle had to help out—or take down for good his brass doorplate, which read:

"CEDRIC LA DELLE, SCIENTIFIC CLAIRVOYANT."

"Miss Boone, I'm very pleased to meet you," he replied to Wheeler's introduction. "Won't you sit down." He indicated a chair, not troubling to rise from his own comfortable seat.

Wheeler placed the chair for her and Miss Boone sank into it nervously. A silk-stockinged ankle peeped from beneath her tailored-to-fit brown skirt.

"Miss Boone, this is Mr. La Delle, the only man I know of who can help you."

"Your sweetheart is in trouble?" shrewdly surmised La Delle. Years of clairvoyancy has made him speedy and unerring at diagnosis."

"Yes, sir. That is, Mr. Kelton—we are engaged to be married—has been falsely accused of theft by his employer."

"Falsely," hummed La Delle, ignoring Miss Boone's flushed cheeks; "I wonder how you know? Hm-m—well, I suppose a woman reasons much as a clairvoyant does." Then, a little louder: "Who is Mr. Kelton's employer?"

"Mr. Clement T. Harrington, the——"

"Oh, the philatelist and numismatist. I've heard of him. So some of his valuable specimens are missing, I take it?"

"Yes, sir. The most valuable ones in his collection."

"And—eh—what grounds has Mr. Harrington for suspecting Mr. Kelton? Did he find the stolen things in his possession?"

"Why, no. He had him searched, though. Mr. Kelton sleeps in the stamp and coin room, you know. The room is believed to be impregnable."

"Impregnable—ah, yes. But do you know, my dear young lady, that I have yet to see a room which is actually that? There's always some point that has been overlooked. Has Mr. Kelton been arrested yet?"

"Ye-es. And he's being done a frightful wrong. And I came to see you on Mr. Wheeler's advice. The police could do nothing, he said."

"Eh, beg pardon, Miss Boone." La Delle turned his face toward Channing Wheeler, who was still standing, an interested listener. "Channing, I've broken one of my most steadfast rules in allowing you to bring a client to see me personally. I'm about to break an equally stringent one. Can you arrange for me—of course you can—to see Mr. Kelton in fifteen minutes?"

"Certainly. The automobile is waiting."

"In case he impresses me favorably—and I have no doubt he will—I should then like to look over Mr. Clement T. Harrington's impregnable strong room."

Miss Boone cast him a little grateful glance as they both rose.

Standing, La Delle looked a dwarf beside the massive frame of Wheeler. He was, in fact, a mere mite of a man—except his head.

La Delle hid himself in a gray greatcoat, though the month was September, and rudely led the way down the flight of stairs. First out of the door, he quickly reversed the doorplate so that it read

"Dr. La Delle."

He was trusting that Miss Boone, in her anxiety, had not noticed the plate on the way in; he was making sure that she would not now learn his true calling.

Leaving Miss Boone in the automobile in front of the City Hall, young Channing Wheeler led La Delle into the building and secured him permission to interview Kelton in his cell. Wheeler joined Miss Boone a minute later to await the return of the little charlatan.

"Well, Miss Boone, what do you make of him?" he asked after a lengthy silence.

"Isn't he a most curious old man? What color are his eyes? I couldn't for the life of me decide through those thick goggles he wears."

"You've got me there," admitted Wheeler, "and I've known him five years. I've never seen him without his glasses. They are of a peculiar tint and hide the true color of his eyes, I think."

"We can now go to the residence of Mr. Harrington," announced La Delle, who had noiselessly approached the automobile. He stepped inside and seated himself beside Miss Boone. "I heard you discussing the color of my eyes," he said mock-reprovingly. "Do you wonder that I like to keep them out of sight?"

He removed his spectacles as he spoke. The color of his eyes was a whitish pink.

He replaced the glasses with a little sigh.

"Not very becoming," he commented, as the car glided around a sharp turn.

"No. Not very," said Miss Boone timidly.

Wheeler held his silence, but felt uncomfortable in his seat at the steering wheel.

"It ran in our family," La Delle explained.

Mr. Harrington was at home and ushered the little party into a front sitting-room. The house was a long, narrow, one-story structure, with a narrow hall running through its center.

"Mr. Harrington," began La Delle, when they were comfortably seated, "I have been asked to investigate the theft of certain of your specimens. As I have not yet heard the story of their loss in all its details, I wish you would run over the facts, that I may have the matter clear in my mind."

"Might I ask in whose interest you are working?" inquired Harrington, who was of medium height and slightly stoop-shouldered.

"In Miss Boone's. She is engaged to marry Mr. Kelton, as you probably know. She believes him innocent; so do I. But I must hear your version before I can be positive."

"I only wish Frank Kelton were innocent," said Harrington with some feeling, "for I have always had great faith in him. But, under the circumstances—well, if he is innocent, then there really are such things as ghosts."

Mr. Cedric La Delle smiled inwardly. Wouldn't Mr. Harrington be a profitable client if he could but convince him that the robbery had been committed by ethereal hands! But another inner voice, it could not exactly be called conscience, said: "Nothing doing! You're working for the department"; and La Delle said aloud: "Proceed, Mr. Harrington."

"It's rather a long story," the philatelist began; "but I'll abbreviate as much as is consistent to clearness. To begin with, I believe I'd better take you all to my bedroom, as I can thereby make my statements plain by pointing out the various details I must mention."

This proving agreeable, Harrington led the way down the long hall to the last door on the right. Perhaps it would be more proper to speak of it as a doorway, for though the casing was there, no door was hung.

La Delle observed that the passageway ended in a door. On the left side of the hall there was a door directly opposite to the open doorway of Harrington's bedroom.

Pointing to the door at the end of the hall, Harrington observed:

"That's the door to the room where I keep my collections. It's a room built onto the back of the house, and that is the only entrance. The room opposite us is the kitchen, and on its opposite side is the back door of the house."

He found chairs for them in his bedroom, which was about twelve by fifteen feet, its length running parallel with the hall. The doorway they had just entered bisected that wall of the bedroom. The room was plaster finished, tinted a light blue.

"Up to last night," said Harrington, "as you have no doubt heard, I had in my possession the largest and most valuable collection of postage stamps in Oakland—I might say, on the Coast. My coin collection was very complete, too. But last night I lost some of the most valuable specimens in both collections. The world-known Mauritius and several of the Hawaiian Missionaries among the stamps, and several United States coins of rare dates."

"I beg pardon," interrupted La Delle. "But would you be able to identify your specimens if found?"

"Every one of them. The stamps by means of carefully recorded cancellation peculiarities, and the coins by a private mark which cannot be eradicated without rendering the coins valueless as specimens."

"Thank you. Proceed, please."

"The room where I keep my collections, and which I shall show you presently, I consider as impregnable as a bank vault. I don't mean in strength, understand. What I do mean is that no one could enter or leave it without my knowledge. The door opening onto the end of the hall, as I said before, is its only entrance. The windows are heavily barred and latticed, and as an additional precaution, my secretary, Frank Kelton, has been sleeping on a couch in the room for the last year.

"At night the collections are locked away in cabinets. I have the place wired so that if the cabinets are even touched the hall lights are immediately flashed on and a bell rings here in my bedroom.

"Last night I sat reading in the chair I occupy now. At about nine o'clock—Kelton had presumably retired—I laid my magazine aside and sat for a while idly thinking

over some of the funny things a visitor, one of my boyhood friends, had told me in the morning. It was a very windy night, as you will recall.

"It was in the neighborhood of half-past nine that I heard a creaking noise at the front of the house; but believing it to be the wind I paid no attention to it. About five minutes later—mind you, I had been constantly staring through the open doorway into the semi-dark hall—the hall lights suddenly glowed and the signal bell rang frenziedly at my bed.

"I reached for my weapon—I believe in always having one handy—and was about to advance to the hall, when a curious sound arrested me, and I sat glued to my chair, listening intently. At first I could not place the direction from which it emanated; then I seemed to sense that it came from that corner of my room." He pointed to where the rear and hall walls met.

"I waited a moment, then called Frank's name aloud. I received no reply. Only the steady grinding in the corner. I was satisfied that there was nobody in this room, but I kept one eye on that corner, and the other on the brilliantly lighted hall.

"The sound grew in intensity, and suddenly, about four feet from the floor, directly where the two walls meet, a little, twisting, glittering pin point of light appeared. I sat as though hypnotized, watching it grow larger as it turned. At last I comprehended what it was. It was the point of an auger-bit.

"Some one in the collection room had bored a hole through the corner of the wall into my room. You can all see it from where you sit."

All eyes, following the sweep of Harrington's arm, sought the corner, and there, sure enough, found the half-inch circular hole left by the bit. Their attention again secured, Harrington continued:

"Suddenly the drill was withdrawn and I could see that the collection room was brilliantly lighted. Then the light was cut off for a moment. Something was between its source and the auger-hole. Could whoever was in that room be peering in at me? I leveled my revolver at the tiny hole. Oh, I could have hit it squarely in the center, believe me. Immediately the eye—I am certain now it was the rascal's eye—was withdrawn. All this time, remember, I was on the alert for any one passing up or down the hall.

"A voice rang out just as I was leaving my chair to start for the passageway. It came from the collection room.

" 'Stay where you are! I have this door open. Enter the hall and you are a dead man!'

"Now, I do not believe myself a coward, folks. But that threat sent a chill tingle zigzagging up and down my spine. However, this was only momentary. I found my voice and ventured to reply:

" 'Try to get past my door and the same holds good for you!'

"A mocking laugh greeted me. I took the receiver of the telephone in my fingers—see, it stands on this table within easy reach of my left hand—and called up police headquarters, informing them of affairs here, never for one instant relaxing my watch on the hall. They promised to send men at once.

"I hung up the receiver, and, people, I will take my oath that no human being passed my open doorway in either direction until the police arrived. To be sure, I heard a slight rasping noise at the front of the house, and thought I could distinguish the mocking laugh again from that direction, but obviously it must have been the wind.

"The police were here inside of fifteen minutes—maybe much inside of that time—but it seemed that long to me. Only when they broke into the front door and came running down the hall did I leave this chair.

"We proceeded with some caution to the collection room, the door of which was ajar. We found there my young secretary, bound to a chair and securely gagged. He was the sole occupant of the room. No windows had been opened and no one had passed my open doorway.

"What is the logical conclusion, folks? Why, that young Kelton himself was the thief—for we saw at once that the cabinets had been ransacked. That, despairing of escape, once I had telephoned, he had tied himself up as a blind, and in some manner disposed of the stamps and coins he had stolen."

"I admire your logical reasoning," observed the little charlatan whose aid young Channing Wheeler had enlisted. "And you surely have propounded quite a mystery. Nevertheless, Mr. Harrington, I have noticed one or two little points to question you on."

"I am at your disposal," replied Harrington, perfectly at ease.

"First, the voice you heard in your treasure room. Did it resemble Kelton's?"

"Not at all. But I figured that he had disguised his voice. Then, too, hearing it through the walls made it hard to identify. It was much gruffer than his. Much more like your own."

"Secondly, the visitor you had yesterday morning. Did you show him your collection?"

"Yes. He was an old school chum of mine."

"Did you explain to him your precautions against theft?"

"Yes. But why? It's no use your suspect——"

"Who was he, Mr. Harrington?"

"Chester Arbuckle. He's a magician in vaudeville. He's at the Elite Theater this week under the name of Del Lela."

"Hm-m," grunted La Delle. "And how about the missing specimens? Of course you searched the collection room thoroughly for them?"

"Of course. From top to bottom."

"And the auger and bit?"

"By George! I forgot them entirely. No, they were nowhere in the room. I should imagine a person could get out as easily as that brace and bit." A frown of perplexity wrinkled his brow. "You've got me muddled now."

"I rather thought I would, Mr. Harrington. And has it ever occurred to you that young Kelton has as good a case against you as you have against him?"

"What!" exclaimed Harrington. "Explain what you mean."

"It's simply his word against yours. Neither of you has any witness to his version. But don't get uneasy, Mr. Harrington. I'd like to see the collection room now, if you please."

All four of them proceeded there, but La Delle's examination was very superficial. All was as Harrington had explained. No surmises need be wasted on trap-doors or secret panels. There was no exit save the hall door, and to leave the house one must necessarily pass Harrington's open doorway.

As they returned up the hall La Delle paused just before they reached the bedroom door. He knelt to the floor, which was thickly carpeted, and pointed out to his interested companions two little depressions in the carpet. They were probably eighteen inches apart, and eight inches out from the wall, and looked as though they had been caused by some one pressing down heavily on a couple of rather large rings.

When Cedric La Delle rose, the expression on his face

was somewhat altered. He had found something that had set him thinking.

In the bedroom the little charlatan took a steel tape from a pocket, and, Wheeler holding one end, took several measurements. The dimensions of the doorway, six feet by two feet six; the height of the back of Harrington's chair, four feet seven; the distance between the chair and the doorway, ten feet; the width of the hall, four feet; and finally, climbing upon Wheeler's shoulders, the height of the ceiling, twelve feet. Then he rolled up his tape and sank into a chair, and with the stub of a pencil began figuring on the back of an envelope.

The others seated themselves, facing in curiosity the industrious little man behind the thick lenses. Wheeler noticed that, when seated, Harrington's head was only two or three inches higher than the back of his chair. La Delle, the observant, had learned this when they first entered the bedroom.

La Delle stopped figuring, put the envelope and pencil away, and, clearing his throat, announced:

"Mr. Harrington, I have now heard both sides of the question. I have heard Kelton's story and I have heard yours. He thinks it was you who bound him up and robbed yourself—he did not see his assailant. On the other hand, you believe he robbed you and bound himself up. I am an expert judge of character, and I have come to the conclusion that you are both upright, honest men. Therefore, you are both mistaken in your surmises.

"No, Mr. Harrington, an outsider robbed you—a man you would only know by sight; a man who is five feet seven and a half inches tall, forty-seven years, three months and seven days old; who has a large anchor tattooed on his chest; a man who entered the front door of your house last evening, proceeded down the hall past your room, and, when he had bound and gagged young Kelton and helped himself to your choicest specimens, proceeded boldly back up the hall past your room and out the front door. You actually heard his mocking laugh the second time in the front part of the house."

"But how could he walk past my room without my seeing him?"

"Mr. Harrington," La Delle questioned in reply, "do you believe in ghosts?"

"Why, no!"

"Neither do I. Upon three conditions only will I secure the return of your specimens. First, that you do not prosecute the thief, should you ever learn his identity. Second, that you secure Kelton's freedom immediately, and take him back into your employ. Third, that you never ask me for my solution of this case. Do you agree to these conditions?"

"I do," replied Harrington regretfully.

"Very well. Call at this address at seven o'clock this evening and I'll return what's yours." He handed him a card with his clairvoyant parlor address.

They found room for Harrington in the automobile and let him and Miss Boone out at the City Hall, to hasten Kelton's freedom.

Wheeler remained in the automobile with La Delle and when the others were out of earshot, the clairvoyant asked to be driven to the stage door of the Elite Theater. He entered alone and in ten minutes rejoined Wheeler, whose curiosity was aroused over the newspaper covered package he carried.

Ensconced once more in his apartments La Delle took from his pocket a leather wallet and tapped it significantly.

"The stamps and coins," he explained.

Then he unwrapped his parcel, disclosing a curious little piece of apparatus constructed of steel tubing. Two parallel tubes, inside of which were still other tubes, telescope-wise, were joined by others, narrower tubes. It looked for all the world like two telescopes set a foot and a half apart, with a horizontal tube joining each congruent division. In the parcel was an auger and its bit.

"To begin with," explained La Delle, "when Harrington mentioned Del Lela, the conjurer, as a boyhood friend of his whose real name was Chester Arbuckle, I knew who the thief was. Chester Arbuckle used to be a magician, but he died two years ago and another man bought his outfit and performed under his stage name, Del Lela.

"This man's representing himself to Harrington as Arbuckle naturally made me suspicious. Harrington, you will remember, admitted that he showed his collections to this man and also explained the method of safeguarding his treasures.

"It seemed quite natural to me that a conjurer should be just the man to figure out a way to get around Harrington's ingenuity, and my surmise proved correct. All I needed was one look at those little depressions in the carpet near the doorway to Harrington's bedroom. If I had cared to look for them I should have found similar marks the other side of the doorway. I knew what had made them instanter. It's a piece of apparatus well known by mediums." He pointed to the steel tubing contrivance.

"Those measurements and calculations I made solved the problem. This contrivance"—he picked it up and gave it a sudden jerk—"is a collapsible ladder, seven feet long. The open ends of the steel tubes made the marks on the carpet. Can you figure it out now?"

"No, not exactly," owned Wheeler, visibly puzzled.

"Why, don't you see? All he had to do was set the ladder up, climb it, step upon the outer casing of the open doorway, reach out with one hand to the opposite wall, only four feet distant, pick up the ladder with the other. Then he could work his way along the casing, set the ladder down the other side of the door, climb down, fold it up and walk boldly out the front door. The opening of locked doors is nothing to a man of his caliber. Of course he entered in the same manner he got out."

Wheeler chuckled at the sheer ingenuity of the schemer. "Of course Harrington couldn't see him from where he sat. You took your measurements to ascertain that?"

"Indeed I did," said La Delle.

"But how did you make him give up the stolen things?"

"Found the ladder in his possession and showed him the slight traces of light blue plaster on the bit-end. He bored that hole so he could see into Harrington's room and make sure his getaway was clear. When I showed him that plaster and promised him immunity, he came through with the goods right away."

"By George, La Delle, you're some wonder-worker! Why don't you give up this charlatanry and join the department? I can land you a handsome berth."

"I can't do it, Channing. Charlatanry runs in my family just as the pink eyes do."

"Well, think it over, anyway. Try to see it from my side. Change your viewpoint. The department needs such men as you. And, by the way, how were you able to describe the thief so accurately?" Wheeler had caught a glimpse of Del Lela at the stage door. "And why the mischief did you let him go free?"

"Wheeler," said La Delle solemnly, "keep this strictly to yourself. I could have been even more precise, but I didn't care to—not in Miss Boone's presence. And as for letting him get away—hell! Channing; he has whitish pink eyes, too. He's—my brother!"

The best and most popular authors in America write for this publication. Tell your friends.

PHARAOH *vs* FARO

By ERNEST JARROLD

NIGHT and the customary pastoral content of peaceful industry had fallen upon Coney Island. June bugs winged their bungling flight around the Finn shanty, and were pursued and eaten by erratic and mysterious bats. It was such a night as wakes the bulbul to rapturous lays in the odorous garden of the Alhambra, but the tuneful mosquito alone sang his strident melody and presented his bill with undaunted persistence.

Mickey and his father sat upon the back stoop listening to the music of Jack Doolan's accordion, as he played an accompaniment to his own voice, and sang that beautiful

nocturne, Opus No. 1, "The Horse Backed Off the Dump."

There was a man in a street hard by,
And Barrett was his name;
He was the owner of a big ash cart,
And a horse that was lazy and lame.
He had a daughter Julia.
A maid that was fair and plump,
But she's not fit to go to a dog fight now,
Since the horse backed off the dump.

At such an hour and surrounded by such influences, with the yellow moon flying through the immensity of space, and startled by the whir of a bat's wings, it was no wonder that Mr. Finn's thoughts should turn toward the occult, the mysterious, and the Oriental.

"It's quare birds thim are, Mickey," exclaimed Mr. Finn, referring to the bats.

"Faix, you're right, father," replied the boy. "They're murtherin' reptiles intirely."

"D'ye tell me so, Mickey?" continued his father. "And whare do they come from?"

"From Agypt, father," replied the boy. "They fly across the ocean every June bekase there's more June bugs here than in Agypt. And what's more, father, they kill min and 'women by suckin' their blood."

"Begorra, Mickey, but that's terrible!" exclaimed Mr. Finn, in alarm. "And whin do they do this?"

"In the night-time, father," continued the boy, in a hushed whisper. "Whin ye're fast asleep and dramin' they sneak in the windy. Oh, but they're sly! And if your big toe was outside the covers they'd suck the life out of ye, and you not knowin' it till ye'd wake up in Paradise."

"Glory be to the saints!" exclaimed Mr. Finn, devoutly crossing himself. "I'll kape me toe covered afther this. But there musht be other quare things in Agypt, Mickey?"

"Faith, there are, father," continued the boy, with oracular solemnity. "They have dynasties and crocodiles, and camels wid four stomachs, and Mahatmas and pyramids, and all the people are nagurs wid thick lips and fat noses, and ivery man and woman in the country is black as yer hat but wan, and he's an Irishman."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Mr. Finn, lost in wonder. "But tell me this, Mickey—what's a dynasty?"

"Usha, it's a quare crayture on two legs wid a long pedigree."

"And who's this Irishman ye were tellin' me about? Is it e'er a man from Kerry, I dunno?" inquired the seeker after knowledge anxiously.

"Arrah, no, father. He kem from Tipperary. He's an Irish gyant who licked Gog and Magog, and the Dago that licked an army in Greece, and after knocking out Samson wid wan blow he went to Agypt lookin' for more min to

fight. And afther goin' around all the fighters in Agypt like a goat around a cabbage he settled down and became an invintor, and they made him king of the country."

"And what was his name, Mickey?"

"Faro," replied the boy unblushingly.

"Faro!" exclaimed Mr. Finn, scratching his head reflectively. "It seems to me I heerd that name before. Whare did I hear it, now?"

"Shure, ye often heerd it, father," said Mickey. "'Tis the name of a game that the gyant invintid."

"You're right, Mickey. You're right, me boy. I often heerd o' that wicked game."

"Yes, but that's only wan o' the things he invintid. The first time he tried his hand at invintion he didn't know how to invint and he failed."

"D'ye tell me so!" exclaimed Mr. Finn. "And what was the first thing he tried?"

"'Twas a thing to keep cows from switchin' their tails whin the Agyptian colleens 'ud be milkin' them. Ye see, the cows in that country were bothered by the flies, and they'd swat their tails around to knock off the flies and hit the colleens, d'ye see."

"Aye, I do," said Mr. Finn.

"Well," continued little Mike, "bein' a dacint man and havin' a tinder heart, Faro didn't like to be seein' the colleens sufferin' on account o' the flies, so he tied bricks on the tails o' the cows, and that day there were twelve funerals in Agypt, and——"

"Ah, ha, I see, I see, Mickey, I see," interrupted Mr. Finn. "The flies——"

"And the tails," interjected the boy.

"And the bricks and skulls and——"

"Funerals," concluded the historian. "And there ye are, as the bull said whin he tossed the widdy over the stone wall. But this didn't sthop Faro from invintin'. He kept on invintin' invintions 'til he invintid an invintion that made him the greatest man in Agypt."

"What was that?" asked Mr. Finn eagerly.

"You musht know, father," said Mickey, "that Faro was the greatest lilter that iver went out of Ireland. Divil's the man or woman could keep their fut on the flure whin he began to lilt. 'Begorra,' says he to himself, 'they worship the snakes in this counthry. I'll see if I can make the snakes dance!' So he tried it wan day, when no wan was lookin', on a poor little garter-snake, and by the hair on Moll Kelly's cat, he had the snake doin' a jig on his tail and crazy wid deloight."

"Shure, how could the poor b'ast resist the swate music?" muttered Mr. Finn sympathetically.

"Yis, and Faro was that plazed wid himself that he got a t'ousand snakes—the woods is full o' thim in Agypt, father—and dumped thim in the road in front of the king's palace. And whin he had thim all on the ground, and they hissin' and showin' their tongues, he began to lilt. Immajetly they left off hissin' and began to stand up. The first wan to get up was a boar-constrictor, wid a calf inside of him he swalleyed the night before, and the next was a python as big around as your leg. There was snakes wid hoods on their heads, big and little, rattlesnakes and copperheads, and black snakes, and hoop snakes, that stick their tails in a hoe handle, and makes it swell up and bust. Inside of a minute they were all up on their tails dancin' a hornpipe, and whin he had thim all up, Faro began marchin' around Agypt wid the snakes follyin' him and dancin' behind him for two hours. 'Twas a grand sight intirely. The news of it wint all over the world, and the next morning Faro got offers from ivery dime museum in the Bowery, to name his own price, but, faith, he couldn't take the offers, because the people made him king of Egypt."

"Faith, ye can't bate the Irish in annything, Mickey!" exclaimed Mr. Finn exultantly, "whether 'tis fightin' or drinkin' or invintin'. And what did Faro do when they made him king?"

"He made new and more liberal laws for the Agyptians," continued little Mike. "He made it a crime to be punished with death if a man refused a dhrink whin he was asked. He allowed no man to work, sayin' that work was made for slaves. He started breweries and encouraged fightin' an' wrestlin'; but he kept on invintin'. He was the divil for invintions. And of all the invintions he invintid none o' them could compare wid the game of Faro, which he didn't invint at all, at all, but only told the Agyptians he did, for he learned how to play the game wid John Morrissey in Saratoga, manny years ago, whin he was on a prize-fightin' trip in America. But the game was new in Agypt, so he took the credit for invintin' it, and the poor divils of Egyptians didn't know the differ."

"How should they?" muttered Mr. Finn sympathetically. "Shure, they have no 'nolledge."

"Well," continued Mickey, "Faro called all the astrologers, and soothsayers, and tooth-pullers—they had no laughin'-gas in thim days, and they pulled teeth with a monkey-wrench—and he made an incantation. All the sacred animals were brought in, the ancient bulls wid goold rings in their noses and brass door-knobs on their horns, and all the my-tho-log-ical goats wid whiskers trailin' on the ground—there were twelve of thim—and the ould ram, Rameses, wid cruked horns. Thin whin he had Isis and Osiris, and Abdullah the Terrible, and a t'ousand beautiful leddies from his hareem, all in the coortyard o' the palace, he clapped his hands and shouted:

"'What ho, there, Sellim! Ye knock-kneed son of Agypt, bring out the red fire!'

"So Sellim brought out the red fire on a shovel and Faro lit it wid a match and ivery wan was afeerd, and the bulls roared and the goats ma-a-a-ed, they were that freckened. Thin Faro shouted again:

"'What ho! Bring out the billiard-cloth!'

"So Sellim brought out five yards o' billiard-cloth and spread it on a table made o' gold. Ye musht know, father, that no gamblin' game can be played widout a grane cloth. To make things interestin' while he was invintin' the game, Faro lit a five-cent fire-cracker and threw it in the crowd, and whin it wint off there was a panic. Whin all was quiet again, Sellim brought in Wan Lung, the laundryman, and made him invint a little wooden box wid rings in it to kape count wid. Thin he spread a pack o' cards out on the table, and a great silence fell on all the people and on all the sacred cattle. They thought an earthquake was goin' to happen. Osiris was lookin' at the game mighty sharp. Says he, 'Faro,' says he, 'I don't want to be axin' foolish questions; but is aces high or low in this game?' 'Aces is low, ye thick-head,' says Faro. 'Make yer bets, leddies and gintlemin! Make yer bets! I'm bettin' a t'ousand dollars on the quane!' And wid that Faro put a pile o' goold on the quane card. Thin whin he turned his head to ask the Quane of Greely Square did she want to bet, a long arm shot out o' the crowd and grabbed the t'ousand dollars he laid down. Whin Faro turned and saw his money was gone, he let a terrible roar out of him. 'I'll put another t'ousand on the leddy,' says he, 'and the wan that dares take it down will lose his head and a big piece of his neck!' So he put down another t'ousand and turned his head, and lo and behold, the hand shot out again and grabbed that money, too. Faro turned again and as he did a sod o' turf struck his goold crown and sint it rollin' on the ground. Thin a tall woman, wid long, red hair, threw a Connemara shawl off her head. She was sthrong and bony and she had an arm on her

like a mule's leg. Whin Faro saw her, he threw up both hands, but he didn't have time to say annything, for the woman was too quick for him.

"'Bad luck to ye, Mike Murphy! You stravagin' blaggard,' says she. 'You thafe o' the wurruld! And is it you is runnin' away from me in Tipperary and playin' yerself off as an invinter, and lavin' me and the childer widout the bit and the sup in the house? Oh, you're the divil's own! Only for matin' Pat Sheedy in Cairo, I wouldn't know where ye were! Ye onnatural baste! Take that! And that! And that!' And she clouted him on the head wid her shoe. Thin she grabbed him by the ear and Osiris gev him a kick, and the ould ram Rameses, helped him along, and all the sacred goats charged on him, and they dragged him out o' the palace and ducked him in a horse-trough—and that's how faro was invintid in Agypt, father," concluded little Mike.

We have some especially good stories ready for the Sept. 15th number. Do not fail to read them.

THE ORIGIN OF FEAR

FEAR is experienced only by animals which depend for self-defense and species preservation upon flight, according to Dr. George W. Crile. The skunk, for example, whose chief means of protection is its odor; the porcupine, defended by its quills; the snake, which repels its enemies by its venom; the turtle, which is securely encased in its shell; the lion and elephant, secure in their superior strength—these all exhibit little if any fear reaction. On the other hand, the rabbit, the bird, the deer, the horse, the antelope, the monkey and man—these are the animals which pre-eminently exhibit fear and an irrepressible desire to flee from danger.

Fear is the mental part of the reaction by which certain types of animals preserve themselves, and it is most interesting in man, who has recently changed from a fleeing animal into a fighting one and who undergoes often agonizing inner struggles between the newly acquired instinct to fight and the age old instinct to run away.

HOW CHINESE PORCELAIN ORIGINATED

ABOUT the year 206 B. C. in the beginning of the dynasty of Han, some Chinese workers in earthernware set their pots in an oven to bake and forgot them. When they remembered them and opened the oven doors they found that the pots were vitrified in shining spots.

Thus the process of enameling porcelain was discovered. When freed of its dross the substance grew lighter, became clear and acquired a grain as fine and smooth as velvet, and a thin, hard, translucent body.

The art of monochromantic glazing was discovered in the time of the dynasty of Sung (960-1280 B. C.). Occasionally the action of the fire separated the pigments and produced excessive richness of color.

The Mongol invasion checked the progress of ceramic art. In 1368 Tai-Tsu, son of a day laborer, dethroned the emperor and founded the dynasty of Ming, whose reign persisted until 1644.

Tai-Tsu lost no time in restoring the imperial manufactories. He gave the national manufactory the monopoly of the work in porcelain, excepting nothing but the white pottery manufactured by the artisans of Tehuan. Under the new impetus all the ancient methods were revived and perfected.

The system of three-color and five-color decoration after a preliminary firing dates from the renaissance of art under the Ming dynasty.

DANGER FROM THUNDERSTORMS

IN this season of the year, when thunderstorms are likely to be frequent, it is wise to observe a few simple rules for protecting oneself, so far as possible, from the danger of lightning stroke.

This danger is more real than many believe, for although only approximately 1,500 persons are struck by lightning in the United States during the average year, and only about 500 of these are killed, it must be remembered that the average person is exposed to this danger for probably less than a dozen hours in the year. It appears, therefore, that no less than 125 persons are struck by lightning in this country in each hour of the danger period.

There is no place which is absolutely safe, for no spot in the path of a thunderstorm is utterly immune to lightning. The nearest to perfectly safe places are rooms entirely surrounded by metal, rooms underground or in a steel framed building, for even though lightning may strike such dwellings, the chances that it would penetrate to the interior are practically negligible.

The next safest place is a well rodded house, though even in this some precautions should be taken. For instance, when a thunderstorm is in progress one should keep away from those parts of the house where lightning conductors pass into the earth, and also away from stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, screen doors and windows, and especially telephones. Small metallic objects, such as scissors, knives and small tools, are not likely to attract lightning.

In unrodded houses an appreciable degree of danger exists. Here one should keep away from the vicinity of down spouts on the exterior of the house and metallic masses in the interior and near the walls, such as radiators, stoves and safes. The safest place in such a house is the middle of the room, well away from the objects named.

Contrary to general belief, houses containing water, gas, steam or hot-water pipes, or other metallic conductors which are connected to earth, are comparatively safe, for lightning is disposed to follow them to the earth, into which it passes off harmlessly. Also it is a mistake to suppose metal beds are especially dangerous. They really form a metallic attraction for diverting lightning from their occupants if it should enter the room.

Nor are currents of air especially dangerous, unless they are very warm or moist. There is no great danger of lightning following a stream of air coming in at an open window or door if the temperature within is the same as that out of doors. Rising streams of smoke or vapors from sweating hay or animals in barns invite lightning, however.

Out of doors one should keep away from lone trees, wire fences, long wire clotheslines and other prominent objects, such as open sheds or small outbuildings standing at a distance from larger structures. Thick timber is comparatively safe, especially if one does not stand under an exceptionally tall tree.

THE FATAL PRINTS

A Serial Detective Story

By WILLIAM S. HALL

CHAPTER THREE.

WORKING UP A CLUE

"BIDDY O'ROURKE very readily made the required promise, whereupon I gave her a five-dollar gold-piece.

"'You have helped me to a good piece of detective work, Biddy, and I hope you'll find a good husband, even if I never find the murderer,' I remarked.

"She blushed to the eyebrows, and said:

"'Sure, an' it's mesilf as will be afther waitin' a while.'

"'Sensible Biddy,' said I, and then I shook hands with her.

"She went out and joined the crowd of eager spectators in the corridor, on the stoop, and in the street in front of the house. Of course she was instantly surrounded, and a thousand questions were eagerly fired at her. She parried like a veteran. She was in her glory. She had a secret which everybody wanted to know, and therefore was all the more determined to keep it. I was on the eve of leaving the house to go to the chief's quarters and make my report, when the thought flashed through my mind, that while I had conclusive evidence that a murder had been committed, I had no clue that could in any way point to the murderer. I tell you, boys, I was fast waking up to my work. I felt it in my bones that I had a tough case on hand, and that all the keen scenting of a sleuth-hound was necessary to success. As the thought occurred to me, I looked around almost in despair, and mentally asked myself: 'What clue have you?'

"Boys, I was trumped. I actually felt ashamed that I had the old miser's razor in my pocket. What had all my fine work amounted to, after all? Glancing around the room, with a feeling of helpless tugging at my heart, my eyes rested on the board of lime mortar. I dropped down on my knees by the side of it. The light was not very good there. I took up the board and ran into the other room and laid it on a chair by the barred window, where the light could strike it with full force.

"'Eureka!' I exclaimed, as I beheld clearly outlined in the mortar every wrinkle and curve in the shoe that had made the print. It was a shoe worn on the right foot, and showed that it had recently been half-soled— probably but a few days before. The line where the new sole joined the old one was plainly and distinctly marked. Then the heel was run down on the outside, as the impression showed. But directly under the instep, between the heel and the ball of the foot, was a peculiar mark that attracted my attention. I did not remember ever having seen such a mark on any boot or shoe, and that's what puzzled me more than anything else. It was right where many ambitious shoe manufacturers stamp their firm names or trade-marks, and if this was a trade-mark, it would do me no good to bother with it. I saw that at a glance. But if it was not a trade-mark, then it would be a clue—a very slight clue—and so I made up my mind to hold on to it, and see what it was worth. The mark that was clearly outlined on the mortar was two rings, one within the other. The outer ring was about seven-eighths of an inch in diameter. The inner one measured about a quarter of an inch across.

"The two were connected by four bars at right angles, as if to hold the inner ring in its place. I gazed at the little mark, and imagined myself running after people, trying to get a glimpse of the soles of their shoes in order to satisfy myself that they were not murderers. What was I to do with the print in the mortar? Clearly I had to preserve it if I would keep it as a clue. Going outside, I called a boy about sixteen years old, and asked him if he wanted a job. He said he did, and I then wrapped a couple of newspapers around the board and placed it on his head.

"'Carry it that way before me,' I said, 'and I will give you a dollar for your trouble.' Just then the police returned to clear the street and enable the undertaker to get into the house. I left, and went direct to headquarters. The chief was at his desk when I went in.

"'Well, Ben,' he said, 'the coroner says it's a case of suicide. What did you find out?'

"'It's a case of murder, sir,' I whispered, for I didn't want anybody to hear me until I had the chief's opinion.

"'The deuce!'

"'Yes, sir,' I answered.

"'Go in there,' he said, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb to the door of his private office, 'and wait for me.'

"I took the board of mortar from the boy and paid him the promised reward, after which I dismissed him. Then I carried the board into the chief's office and laid it on his table. Ten or fifteen minutes later he came in.

"'What's this you were telling me, Ben?' he said. 'The coroner says it's a case of suicide, and he is an old stager, you know.'

"'He's an old hog,' I said, riled at the recollection of his treatment of me at the house of the murdered man.

"'Why, what's the matter?'

"I told him how the coroner had treated me.

"'Oh, that's his way,' said the chief. 'When you understand him better you will like him very much.'

"'I don't think I will, chief,' I said. 'It's the first time we ever met, and first impressions are most lasting.'

The chief laughed, and then asked me why I thought it was a case of murder instead of a suicide, and I told him of the result of my investigation. He was amazed.

"'Ben!' he exclaimed, grasping my hand, and shaking it warmly, 'you have done the work of an old hand! It's a clear case of murder. Take the thing in hand and work

it up. I am sure you can do it. I'll have this mortar dried or baked hard, and keep it under lock and key. You can have an impression of that peculiar mark as soon as it is dry and hard. That coroner doesn't know as much as he thinks he does. It will make his eyes open wide when he hears what you have done.

"'Don't let out the secret about that mark of the shoe, chief?' I asked.

"'Oh, no. I will make it clear that a foul murder has been committed, though.'

"'There is one thing that puzzles me, chief.'

"'What is it?'

"'That nothing was stolen from the rooms of the victim,' I replied.

"The chief looked hard at me for several minutes, and asked:

"'Are you sure of that?'

"'Yes; the girl said nothing had been disturbed.'

"A dead silence followed, after which he brightened up.

"'Ah! I have it, Ben,' he said.

"'What is it, chief?'

"The murderer intended to leave the impression behind that it was an actual suicide. There's a deep motive somewhere behind it.'

"'That's very likely,' I returned. 'It would not do to take anything, as that would destroy the theory of suicide.'

"'Of course. Now work it up and look out for somebody whom may profit by the old man's death.'

"I went out, and in the main room met the crusty old coroner, who was coming to see the chief on other business than the one he had just so unceremoniously disposed of. He gave me a contemptuous glance and passed into the chief's room. There he soon learned what a fool he had made of himself. But would you believe it, boys, he actually insisted on his verdict being the correct one, and that mine was the theory of a young crank? But the chief soon disabused his mind, and when the coroner came out it was my time to give contemptuous glances, and I did. He saw them, too, and looked sick. The chief made it known that the old miser was murdered, and told how it was found out and by whom. The result was, the other detectives on the force were a little more respectful toward me, and the advertising gave me a lift that gave me a good deal of encouragement. The next day I got from the chief a cast of the peculiar mark on the bottom of the shoe, as given by the print in the mortar.

"Being the only clue I had to work upon, I had it taken in metals, so that usage would not injure it. Even after I had done that I was not certain that I would ever have any use for it, as I had but little idea of how I was going to get at the work on the clue. The fact is, I was puzzled to get a starting point. You, boys, all know just what I felt at that time, for you have all been there, more or less, in your careers. The more I looked at the mark, the more I was convinced that it was not a regular trade-mark of any manufacturer of shoes. Still I made up my mind to visit all the manufacturers and shoe dealers in the city, and look for such a peculiar mark. Accordingly, I started out, and on the first day visited over a dozen large wholesale dealers and manufacturers. One of the head men of a very large firm said:

"'You will find that all reputable dealers stamp their names, or some trade-mark, on their boots and shoes.'

"'Did you ever see a trade-mark like this?' I asked, showing him the metal copy of the mark I was in search of. He took it and examined it closely. Then he got a piece of leather and stamped it, making a clear mark with it.

"'No, sir,' he said. 'That was never put on a shoe by a dealer.'

"'You think not?' I said.

"'I am quite sure of it,' he replied.

"'But it's a mark on the bottom of a shoe or boot,' I said, 'the wearer of which I am in search of. It's a clue to an awful crime, sir.'

"'Indeed!' and the merchant at once became interested.

"'Yes, sir.'

"'What case is it?' he asked.

"'Secrecy is my best hold,' I replied.

"'Ah! I forgot,' and the merchant bowed.

"Then, a moment later he asked:

"'Did you notice if the shoe or boot had ever been repaired in any way?'

"'Yes; I think it had been recently half-soled.'

"'Ah! That accounts for the mark.'

"'How so?'

"'Some cobblers are in the habit,' he said, 'of putting a mark on every pair of shoes they repair.'

"'For what purpose?' I asked.

"'A private trade-mark, or for a little advertising, or something of that sort. I think you would be more apt to get the information you are in search of from some cobbler.'

"The thought flashed through my mind that the merchant was right, and so I concluded to give up my visit to the large dealers in shoes, and confine myself among the cobblers. With this determination I went back to my quarters to rest, and prepare for a hard day's work on the morrow."

CHAPTER FOUR

AN HEIRESS APPEARS

"FOR several days I worked diligently among the cobblers over on the east side of town, but without success. I could understand German and French very well; but now and then I'd strike an Italian or Russian cobbler, and it was no end of trouble to make myself understood. But I would manage to find some one in the vicinity who could act as interpreter, and thus, after considerable difficulty, get the point settled that they knew nothing about such a mark, and then go on. The work was becoming quite monotonous, and, to tell the truth, I was getting tired of it. Just as I was about to give up the job for the day, I entered a cobbler's shop down under the pavement, and showing the mark, asked the shoemaker:

"'Did you ever make a mark like that on the bottom of a shoe?' The shoemaker took the mark and examined it.

"'Did anybody say I did?' he asked.

"'No,' I answered. 'I am looking for the shoemaker who did put such a mark on a shoe he half-soled for a man.'

"'What do you want with the shoemaker?'

"'I want him to describe the man to me,' I replied.

"'Why describe him?'

"'So I can find him.'

"'What do you want to find him for?'

"'He is wanted in a very important case.'

"'Oh, you're a detective, are you?"

"'Yes.'

"'Well, get out of here now as quick as you can. I won't have no detectives prowling around my shop'; and he gathered up a shoe-knife and made an ugly demonstration toward me.

"'I will go when you have answered my question,' I replied, 'and not before.'

"'You won't, eh?'

"'No.'

"He made a lunge at me with the knife. I was on my guard, and in a flash the shoemaker was on his back in a corner of his little shop. I had given him just one thump, and that satisfied him that he had a tough customer to handle. Pulling himself together, he came at me with a hatchet he had picked up. Instantly my revolver was covering him.

"'Bullets discount hatchets,' I said, 'and if you don't drop that I'll drop you!'

"He dropped the hatchet and glared at me like a tiger at bay.

"'Now, answer my question,' I demanded, 'or I'll run you in for resisting an officer in the discharge of his duty.'

"'No,' he growled, 'I never used a mark like that.'

"'Why didn't you say so at first, then?"

"'Because I hate detectives,' he said.

"'Have you ever been arrested?"

"No answer.

"'Ah! I can understand why you hate 'em,' I said. 'You have been pulled in by one. Now, as long as you stick to your last, and make an honest living, you will never be troubled by them,' and with that I turned away and left the shop. But on my way back to my quarters, I was more than half-inclined to suspect that the shoemaker had lied to me. To test the matter, I was resolved to disguise myself the next day and take him a pair of my old shoes to be half-soled. This I did, and he was half-suspicious of me when I entered his shop. But I pretended to look at nothing, and after bargaining with him in regard to price, left the shop. The next day I called for the shoes, and got them. A glance at the bottoms showed no sign of a mark of any kind. The cobbler eyed me rather suspiciously, I thought, and I paid for the shoes and went away with them.

"'That fellow is a rascal, who is expecting to be arrested at any moment,' I said to myself. 'I will have to look up his record and see what he is before I can be satisfied in regard to him.'

"On visiting the Rogues' Gallery I instantly picked out his picture among several hundred. He was a burglar, who had served two terms in the State prison. He had now been two years out of prison, and was supposed to be earning an honest living at his trade. His name was Tom Hickox, but he had changed it to 'Hicks,' which was the sign over the entrance to his shop.

"'All right, Tom,' I muttered; 'I'll keep an eye on you from this time out. If you don't know anything about that mark, you know something else, and I'll find it out some day.'

"But I kept up my search among the cobblers, as I felt sure I would stumble upon the right one in the course of time. One day, nearly two weeks after the murder of the old miser, the chief sent for me. I put in my appearance a few minutes after receiving his summons.

"'What luck, Ben?' he asked, as soon as I entered his room.

"'None at all,' I replied. 'But I haven't gone through all the cobbler-shops in the city yet.'

"'You intend to visit them all, do you?'

"'Yes, sir. I have no other clue to go on.'

"'Yes, that's so. I have a little bit of news for you, though, which may help you along not a little.'

"'What is it, chief?'

"'An heir has turned up who claims the old miser's property.'

"'Ah! That may give me a point or two!' I exclaimed.

"'Yes, she was up to see the Public Administrator yesterday.'

"'It's a woman, then?'

"'Yes, or rather a girl; for she does not appear to be over twenty years old.'

"'Where is she?'

"'She is a factory girl out in Paterson, New Jersey.'

"'Is she in the city now?' I asked.

"'Yes, I think she is. I will find out where she is stopping and let you know. You ought to see and talk with her.'

"The next day a note in the handwriting of the chief was handed me. It read: 'Go to No. —— on East Twelfth street, and ask for Dora Creighton. She is the one.' There was no name signed to the note, but it made no difference. I knew the hand writing, and so hastened to the street and number mentioned. On ringing the bell, I found the place to be a cheap boarding-house, of which there were many in that locality. I was shown into a parlor or reception-room, the carpets and furniture of which were very much faded, and had a musty smell. In a few minutes a young girl, for she had a very girlish face and figure, came into the room.

"'Did you wish to see me, sir?' she asked, stopping in front of where I was sitting, and looking quizzically at me.

"'Yes, miss, if you are Dora Creighton,' I answered, rising to my feet.

"'That is my name, sir,' she said.

"'My name is Croly—Ben Croly,' said I, the detective detailed to work up the case of the Creighton murder.'

"'Oh, yes, sir. I—I—am—glad to see you, sir. Please be seated, and tell me something about my poor uncle's death.'

"She had regained her composure and dropped into a chair. As I resumed my seat, I took a good look at her. She was really a handsome girl, with fair skin, very dark auburn hair, large brown eyes, rosy lips, and pearly teeth. She was dressed in a plain, but neat suit of black. She did not give me much time for inspection, but said:

"'I know nothing but what I have seen in the papers, which a friend brought to me the other day.'

"'He was your uncle, I believe?' I asked.

"'Yes, sir, my father's brother,' she replied.

"'Where were you born, Miss Creighton?'

"'In New York City.'

"'Is your father living?'

"'No, sir, nor mother either; I am alone in the world.'

"'You will excuse me for asking questions, will you not?'

"'Oh, yes, sir, if you will tell me all you know about uncle's death.'

"'That I will soon do,' and I proceeded at once to tell her all I had found out about it.

"'You really think, then, that he was murdered?' she asked, when I had finished.

"'Yes. I haven't the slightest doubt about it.'

"'Who could have done it?'

"'That's the problem I am now trying to solve. It was not an ordinary murder. It was intended to make the world believe that it was a suicide. In that the murderer made a complete failure.'

"'They tell me that nothing was missed from his house.'

"'No, nothing whatever. The murderer evidently hoped to reap his reward afterwards.'

"'Why, how could he?' she exclaimed, turning very pale and trembling like a leaf.

"'Ah! that is what I have not yet found out. As you are the heir the murderer no doubt thinks he could get at it better in your possession than in that of your uncle.'

"'Ugh! That's awful to think about!' and she gave a shudder, as if chilled to the marrow.

"'Why is it that you never lived with your uncle, Miss Creighton?' I asked.

"'Because he and my father quarreled many years ago, and they never were reconciled. When my father died my mother, being very sick and very poor, applied to him for help. He never answered the letter, and my poor mother died two years later. I have had to earn my own living ever since I was twelve years old.'

"'Do you think your uncle intended that you should have his money after his death?'

"She was greatly surprised at the question, and stared at me, as if puzzled to know what to say. But she gave a frank reply.

"'No, sir; I don't think he did, as he never saw me but once in his life. Then he was very harsh to me, and told me not to come about him again. I have come to the city to claim the property as the nearest of kin, in case there is no will!'

"'In which you are perfectly right, Miss Creighton!' I said, 'and I hope, for your sake, that no will has been found that will interfere with your prospects.'

"'Thanks,' she said, and then I prepared to take leave of her.

"'You will allow me to call again, will you not?' I asked, 'if I should desire to ask any more questions in reference to the case?'

"'Certainly. I would be pleased to do everything in my power to aid you. Have you got any clue that leads you to suspect any one?'

"'No,' I replied very promptly. 'I only wish I had!' and then I took leave of the heiress.

"On my way back to my quarters I could not help thinking of the beautiful factory girl, who had thus fallen heiress to a big fortune.

"'She'll be worth a half million or more,' I said, 'and will find little difficulty in getting a husband.'

"The next morning before going out on the hunt among the shoe shops, I called on the chief and told him about my interview with the heiress.

"'What do you think of her?' the chief asked.

"'I think she is a nice girl, and well deserves her good fortune,' I replied. 'Do you know if there has been any will found?'

"No. The old man's lawyer says he doesn't think any had been drawn, though the old man said something about having one drawn only a few weeks before his death.

"'And he intended to cut off his niece, the old rascal!' I said.

"'No doubt of it,' said the chief dryly.

"I went out and resumed my search, taking in the shops on the West Side. I visited shop after shop and met with the same reply in all of them. Nobody knew anything about such a mark. In one of the shops I met Tom Hickox. He scowled at me and began whispering to the two workmen in the little shop. When I told my errand the proprietor of the shop said:

"'You want ter git outen hyer like greased lightnin'. We ain't givin' nothin' away hyer, we ain't.'

"'Yes, you are,' said I, drawing my iron, for I saw that I would have all three of them on me in a minute. Hickox suddenly drew a revolver. I instantly covered him with mine.

"'You are a dead man, Tom Hickox,' I said, 'if you move a muscle.'

"Tom dared not move. He stood like a statue, staring at me like one bewitched.

"'Drop that shooter!' I ordered.

"He let it fall, and it was discharged. He sprang up with a howl. The ball had entered the calf of his leg. The two other shoemakers thought I had shot him, and sprang at me like tigers. One of them I felled with a blow on the head with my revolver, and the other one was knocked out at one thump. I was a hard hitter in those days, boys, and didn't mind how many came at me with their knuckles. The fight was over in two minutes, by which time I had Tom Hickox by the collar, and was about to march him off to the station for interfering with me, when half a dozen roughs rushed into the shop and threw themselves on me."

(To be continued.)

MIGRATION OF MOSQUITOES

SOME surprising facts regarding the migration of mosquitoes and other insects have been discovered by Prof. S. C. Ball, who spent a month at Rebecca Shoal Lighthouse last summer. This lighthouse is isolated in the ocean, twelve nautical miles from the nearest land, which is East Key, Tortugas, while the nearest region on which any considerable number of mosquitoes can breed is Marquesas Atoll, twenty-four miles distant to the eastward. Breezes from the north and east brought mosquitoes to the lighthouse, and in one case a strong southerly wind brought them from Cuba, ninety-five miles away. Indeed, in some instances there was evidence that they were brought by favorable winds from even more distant points; perhaps from Tampa Bay, 180 miles distant! House flies and various other insects were also captured at the lighthouse.

LORDS OF THE DESERT BECOME BANKERS

THOSE who always have thought of the Arab as a fierce individual with a long-barrelled gun and a prancing desert steed may be surprised to hear that he is turning to trade.

An interesting experiment in the financial world of Tunisia is the establishment in the Souk-El-Grana, Tunis, of the first Moslem bank in the Regency, the Comptoir Commercial Arabe, whose capital of 400,000 francs ($77,200 at normal exchange) is subscribed and managed by Arabs. For the present the bank's activities are limited to mercantile transactions, the capital being too small for a general banking business. The Koranic prohibition of interest is also a delicate matter in a Moslem community so conservative as Tunis, where Moslem depositors sometimes waive the interest on their deposits in the French banks of the city.

The establishment of this bank is also of interest as showing the result of contact with the French in developing the often denied ability of the Arab to organize. This ability has already been shown in the chain of wholesale and retail grocery stores managed entirely by Djerbians (the Lotus Eaters of Homer), who maintain a successful monopoly of the native trade and are even taking a considerable share of the European trade in spite of keen competition from the city's French, Italian and Jewish grocers.

CURRENT NEWS

SHAVES TO PROVE LOYALTY

Wentzel Beecher, residing southwest of Defiance, O., has had his long silken whiskers removed from his face in order to prove that he is strictly American. False reports had been circulated to the effect that Beecher had stated he would not shave his whiskers till Germany had won the war.

A WELL MORE THAN A MILE DEEP

A well being dripped on a farm in West Virginia in search of deeper oil sands penetrates into the bowels of the earth for 7,363 feet, or nearly one and one-third miles. It is hoped to find gas or oil under great pressure at a still lower level.

The depth of this well exceeds the height of Mount Washington.

CREEK INDIAN GIVES BLOOD

Dick Larney, a Creek Indian of Co. F, 142d Infantry, Fort Worth, Tex., who was shot through both legs by the accidental discharge of a gun recently, will lose one of his legs as a result of the injury. Blood given by Guy Coachman, another Creek Indian, who is in Larney's company, will result in saving Larney's life, physicians believe. More than one pint of blood was transfused

CEMENT MADE FROM BEETS

A by-product is obtained in the manufacture of beet sugar from which cement can be made, according to a Paris report, says *Popular Mechanics*. In boiling beets to make the sugar there collects a thick scum which has been found to contain considerable carbonate of lime. The amount of calcium carbonate which can be obtained from 100,000 tons of beets is about 6,000 tons. When sufficient clay is added and the substance burned, a high grade of cement is obtained.

BACTERIAL INHABITANTS OF CREAM

The population of the United States is approximately one hundred millions; the bacterial population of one cubic centimeter of ice-cream is 37,859,909, or about six hundred and six millions to a cubic inch. That makes quite a crowd of bacteria in a glass of ice-cream soda. But don't be afraid of your ice-cream on that account, for most of those bacteria are harmless, and many of them are actually helpful, enriching the gastric juice by adding to its digestive properties.

WHERE THE WIND BLOWS TRAINS OFF TRACKS

There is a stretch of railway along the west coast of Ireland, where it was formerly not an uncommon occurrence for the trains to be blown from the rails by the winds from the ocean, says *Popular Science Monthly*. These disasters are now prevented by the use of an ingenious form of anemometer, which rings an alarm-bell when the velocity of the wind reaches sixty-five miles an hour. Each station on the line keeps on hand a stock of movable ballast, a ton of which is placed aboard every car arriving at the station after the bell sounds.

PROSPERITY OF MOROCCO

The progress made in Morocco during the last three years, in spite of the war, has been extraordinary. The trade, which was practically monopolized by Germany before the war, was now passed largely to France, who has spent vast sums on the restoration and improvements of Moorish towns and rural districts. Under the direction of General Lyautey, good quarters, new roads, and bridges have sprung up where formerly only a wilderness existed. The railway is another recent addition to the Moorish landscape.

IT THREADS IN THE DARK

No matter how good your eyes are there is always a certain amount of eye strain in threading a needle. If your vision is not as sharp as it once was, it is even something of a task to get a piece of thread through a needle's eye.

A needle has been devised which can be threaded by the simple expedient of looping the thread over the head of the needle and drawing it downward. As described in *Popular Science Monthly*, this needle differs from the ordinary in that it has an opening through the top of the eye through which the thread slips, when it is drawn downward. The steel ends spring close together as soon as the thread has passed into the eye.

HOW "NEWS" ORIGINATED

Early newspapers modestly claimed that they published important happenings in all quarters of the earth, and to prove it printed on the first page of each issue a cross with the letters N. E. S. and W. at its points, to indicate the four directions of the compass.

A day came, however, when some busy editor, pressed for time, left out the diagram, and printed the letters in a straight line on his outside page, N. E. S. W. The next step made them into the single words "news." A considerable number of North Americans spend their days and nights seeking news and preparing it for a critical public. Almost one-half the newspapers of the world are published in the United States and Canada.

PRIMEVAL ISLAND FOUND

An island of the future, inhabited only by pigs, red crabs as big as turtles, weird and vicious birds and futuristic fish was discovered on a recent trip in the waters of the Southern Pacific by Captain W. F. Buckley while making a cruise through the dangerous Cliperton Islands, two hundred miles south of the Mexican coast.

"We shot all the fish we wanted," Buckley said. "It was too uninteresting fishing with a line. They fought for an empty hook.

"The island is too primitive for even barbarians. The island is a coral reef with a mean altitude of eight feet.

"The only living things are a herd of pigs and a cocoanut tree. The island is rich in phosphate, but it would require an aerial tramway to get it to the coast on account of the numerous animals. Continual cloudbursts and undercurrents make landing a hazardous undertaking."

600 CANNERY EMPLOYEES SAVED FROM ICE FLOES

After saving the lives of more than 600 cannery employees, including twenty-one men marooned on an iceberg for three weeks, the United States fisheries steamer *Roosevelt*, Captain H. Bierd, returned to Seattle, Wash., from Alaskan waters.

The *Roosevelt* rescued three vessels, all of which had been crippled in the ice-choked seas.

The twenty-one men taken from the iceberg escaped from the ship *Tacoma* of the Alaska Packers' Association, when she was crushed by the ice in Bristol Bay and sank May 19. Six fish boats, a few blankets, a small amount of food and some canvas were all that the men saved. They had been living for several days on seagulls.

A NEW SOURCE OF SUGAR

Much was said a few years ago about the development in the Philippines of the industry of making sugar from the nipa palm. Mr. O. W. Barrett, formerly of the Philippine Bureau of Agriculture, states that in 1914 the bureau worked out a process by which it is possible to produce a fairly light-colored sugar, which crystallizes readily, from the kaong, or sugar palm, which has been used for centuries in the Far East. The difficulty in making high-grade sugar lay in the large amount of organic impurities in the sap. Mr. Barrett, who recently lectured on this subject before the Biological Society of Washington, stated that without any expense for cultivation the sugar palm yields a better crop year after year, for at least twenty years, than does the sugar cane, and vast areas of it occur in the islands.

WOMEN HOLD RECORDS FOR TYPEWRITING

The first woman typist to write over a hundred words a minute in a speed contest was Miss Bessie Friedman of New York, who accomplished the feat at Spokane, Wash., six years ago. On that occasion Miss Friedman averaged nearly 107 words a minute for thirty minutes. In 1906 Miss Rose Fritz wrote eighty-two words a minute, which remained the record until 1019, when H. O. Blaisdell pounded out 109 words in sixty seconds. Miss Florence E. Wilson reached 112 in 1912, surpassing Miss Friedman's feat. In 1913, at New York, Miss Margaret B. Owen won the typewriting championship with an average of 125 words a minute for sixty minutes. Emil Trefzger took second place with 120 words, and Gus Trefzger was third with 117 words. At the world's championship contest, 1915, Miss Owen retained her title, writing 136 words a minute for one hour.

FIRST THAMES STEAMBOAT

The first attempt at steam navigation on the historic Thames was made 117 years ago, several years before Fulton made his memorable trip on the Hudson in the Clermont. This epochal trial trip was dismissed with a few lines by the London newspapers. The most extended account was as follows: "An experiment took place on the River Thames for the purpose of working a barge or any other heavy craft against tide by means of a steam engine of a very simple construction. The moment the engine was set to work the barge was brought about, answering her helm quickly; and she made way against a strong current, at the rate of two miles and a half an hour." This steam craft was a mere makeshift, and not to be considered a real steamboat. The centenary of steam navigation on the Thames was celebrated in 1915, as it was in 1815 that one Dodd brought a steam vessel from Glasgow to London. Since then the Thames has never been without steam vessels.

INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS WITH COLUMNS SET BACK

A new form of factory building has recently been coming into use in which the columns are set back from the walls. The purpose of this is to give a continuous stretch of glass for the walls of the building which will admit considerably more light than the normal construction in which the column forms part of the wall. The floors of the building are supported either on brackets or else they have a cantilever projection beyond the columns. A good example of this construction is found in a seven-story and basement structure built in Chicago last year. The floors project six inches beyond the outer line of the columns, giving a clearance of three inches between the column and the glass. For architectural purposes, the columns at the corners and those next to the corners are built flush with the walls. As a result of this construction not only is there a considerable increase in the amount of light introduced within the building, but the ventilating surface is increased over twenty per cent.

CURIOUS FACTS ABOUT PAIN

That a high-speed rifle bullet may pierce a man and cause him so little pain that he is unconscious of his wound has long been known. A slower bullet would cause considerable pain and shock. Dr. George W. Crile finds an explanation of this and similar phenomena in his researches in the evolution of actions and responses. The evolution of organs has been pretty thoroughly worked out, buf the evolution of functions of organs is a new thing.

During the long course of development of man and his ancestors swift piercing and laceration such as inflicted by a high speed bullet were not encountered, and hence no pain reaction against them would evolve, while slow lacerations were most common, and the usefulness of being conscious of them in the keen way of pain is most evident.

Such is the insensibility of the human organism to an uncommon sort of injury that, according to Doctor Crile, "a device of exquisitely sharp knives driven at superlatively high speed might cut the body to pieces without causing any pain whatever."

MAN DEVELOPS 1 1-2 H. P.

Interesting attempts have been made to determine the maximum external power capable of development by men of good physical endowment. Tests have been made by racing strong youths up flights of stairs. Their weights, the heights ascended and the seconds spent in the ascents have been measured. From these figures the amount of work accomplished has been computed, says *Popular Mechanics*.

One fellow, the best athlete in the group, weighed 168.3 pounds at the time of a recent experiment. In six seconds, from a standing start, he raised himself to a height of 28.96 feet. His average power was thus 812.33 pounds-feet a second, or the equivalent of 1.5 horsepower. This result was attained without special training.

Experiments have been made in different places and it has been found that the inclination of a stairway, within the limits of 27.4 degrees and 37.4 degrees, has no appreciable effect on the results. Up to 13.12 feet the generation of energy accelerates rapidly, but after that point the increase is not so great. The greatest efficiency is obtained on a course reaching to a height of about 29 feet. The effect of fatigue is noticeable when far greater heights are attempted.

DIET OF THE UNITED STATES SOLDIER

Dr. John R. Murlin, Chief of the Food Division, Sanitary Corps, stated at the annual meeting of the American Medical Association, that the diet of the soldier in training in military camps in this country was perhaps the most liberal ever provided for any army. The garrison ration, the basis of allowance for one man for one day, allows one and a quarter pounds of meat for each man. Of this, seventy per cent. was issued as beef or other fresh meat, twenty per cent. as ham and ten per cent. as bacon. The ration also allowed eighteen ounces of bread. The actual consumption of these articles, however, was much less than these amounts. Results of nutritional surveys made in more than forty camps and covering in the neighborhood of 300 separate messes, showed that about eleven and a half ounces of fresh meat on the average were consumed by each man each day and three and a third ounces of breakfast bacon or substitutes, just short of ten ounces of bread, one and a quarter ounces of breakfast cereal, 2.4 ounces of beans or other legumes, one ounce of rice or other starch furnishing cereals, twelve and a half ounces of potatoes, etc. The total energy supplied was in the neighborhood of 4,000 calories, of which some seven per cent. was wasted, leaving a net consumption of nearly 3,700 calories. The average cost of this food, as selected by the mess sergeant, is $0.4275. The value of the waste in terms of the original cost is three cents.

OLD REVOLUTIONARY BARRACKS

Reminiscences of the golden days, when troops were quartered in the vicinity of the New York City Hall, are recalled by the preparations to use the vacant Court House site for army barracks. In the same neighborhood, during the Revolution, the British army had its largest barracks in the lower part of the city. For more than thirty years a long line of these wooden buildings occupied the northern section of City Hall Park fronting on Chambers street. The barracks were erected by order of the Common Council in 1757. The buildings exceeded 400 feet in length. They were used for the quartering of the British soldiers at the outbreak of the Stamp Act troubles and after the battle of Long Island in 1776, until the evacuation of the city. For a short period preceding the battle of Long Island some of the Continental troops under command of General Washington occupied them.

Just below the barracks the Sons of Liberty erected in the Common Lands, now the park, a tall Liberty pole which was cut down several times by British soldiers previous to the actual outbreak of hostilities. On June 4, 1766, on the celebration of King George III.'s birthday, the soldiers destroyed the pole, which had been put up two weeks before in commemoration of the repeal of the Stamp Act.

The close of the Revolution made the old barracks useless and they were regarded as a detriment to the neighborhood. In January, 1790, the Common Council ordered the buildings to be removed by April 20, but it was not until 1791 that they were obliterated.

WAR'S "NERVE CENTER"

When Gustave Eiffel designed his famous tower, 1,000 feet high, for the Paris Exposition in 1889 he planned to erect the greatest structure of its kind in the world. He could not know, however, that he was providing an ideal location for the powerful radio station which has become the "nerve center" of France in war. The wireless apparatus in the Eiffel Tower has enabled the French military authorities to keep in touch with their own front, with England and formerly with Russia. Its importance is shown by the repeated efforts of Germain air raiders to destroy it. It was there that the first wireless telephone message sent across the Atlantic from Arlington, Va., was received.

When the Eiffel Tower first reared its heights into the sky it was denounced by many prominent Frenchmen as an eyesore. Distinguished artists joined, among them Gounod, in a petition against it. It is constructed of iron lattice work and is extraordinarily light for its bulk. For many years after it was erected the belief was prevalent in Paris that the tower could not withstand a gale and that some day it would come crashing down. This baseless fear ruined the Champs de Mars district for building purposes and it is only within the last few years that the people have forgotten their fears. Many now live in the shadow of the tower.

Three sets of elevators give access to the summit, from which the view of the city and the surrounding country is remarkable. The tower cost more than $1,000,000, of which the French Government contributed $292,000. The fees taken in during the exposition year repaid the outlay, and the Eiffel Tower has since been a source of profit to the stockholders of the corporation which controls it. In the last year before the war the tower gave a profit of $42,000.

1,000 YEARS TO BREED BELGIUM'S HORSES

William Crownover of Cedar Falls, Ia., sold a Belgian stallion to C. G. Good, Ogden, Utah, for the sum of $47,000. This is said to be the highest price ever paid for a horse of the Belgian class. The Belgian breed of horses is the result of 1,000 years of careful breeding.

When the Germans invaded Belgium in 1914 they took possession of every good Belgian horse or mare to be found and sent them all to Germany. The editor of the *Capital*, while visiting the German lines in Belgium in 1915, being chaperoned by Captain Schroeder, saw 700 brood mares which had been brought back from the firing line, where they had been drawing and swinging artillery.

The editor asked the captain what we, in America, were to do for our Belgian breed of horses. He replied with a smile, "You will have to get them from us, up in Germany."

These Belgian brood mares were with foal and the hair had been worn off their necks and sides by rough application of the harness. They were being stabled in an immense railroad shop. Stalls had been created by the use of two by fours and the mares were being given plenty of hay and oats to revive them. The editor heard of one Belgian colt which the Germans did not succeed in getting.

Belgium is a small country and no man has more than two or three horses. Seldom one family has more than one brood mare. The family in question had a dapple gray male colt aged eighteen months. When the Germans came into Belgium at Liege the family didn't know what to do with the colt. In America the animal would have been worth $4,000.

The family united in digging a deep sub-celler under the house. They also dug a sloping pathway leading from the surface to the cellar. They then restored the earth and gave it the appearance of never having been touched. The Germans had not succeeded in finding the colt up to last accounts, but doubtless they captured him in the end.

However, the Belgian breed of horses will not run out. There are enough pure Belgians in the United States to keep up the breed. At the last Iowa State Fair there were many samples of the Belgian breed which could not be surpassed even in Belgium

ELECTRICAL HEATING FOR BEDS

In view of the great importance of a warm bed, especially in pneumonia, "it is more than a little curious," says the *Lancet*, "that the maintenance of the patient's warmth in bed should have been left so long to the precarious ministry of the hot-water bottle." It is true that electrical devices have been introduced for this purpose, but they have not come into general use. The *Lancet* tells us how this problem has been solved at the Treloar Cripples' Hospital, Alton, England, where two wards are now supplied with electric mattresses, which have proved both safe and convenient. The mattress looks like any other, except that a flexible wire enters it at the head. The resistance wire is insulated by glass beads in flexible metallic tubing incorporated in the substance of the mattress. The heating element is so arranged that the maximum heat is produced at the foot end, less in the middle, and none at the head. The current may be graduated by a switchboard on the wall, so that any desired degree of heating may be produced up to a certain safe maximum, which cannot be exceeded. It is found that the use of this device results in a saving of three hours a day in each ward where the electric mattress has replaced the hot-water bottle, and the expense is not excessive.

SEWER PIPES FROM MOLTEN LAVA

The making of sewer pipes and bricks of the molten lava from the active volcano Kilauea is advanced as a business proposition by a retired Ohio manufacturer of sewer pipes, who visited the Hawaiian Islands recently. The volcano is on the island of Hawaii, thirty-two miles from Hilo, and reached directly by automobile over a smooth road that dips down through a break in the wall of the old crater to the floor of dead lava and thence almost to the brink of the pit of Halemaumau.

It is declared that with proper machinery, pipes could be molded from the molten material in foundries. The plan has been advanced to erect endless bucket conveyors that could bear the lava out of the pit, the buckets to be made of a special material capable of withstanding heat up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. It is believed that the lava would remain liquid during the short time it would be on the way to the molds, which could be placed in a building near the edge of the crater.

For the past ten years a brick company has been making building bricks from lava rocks. Its plant is located in the district of Kaimuki, where there is a vast outcropping of lava rock from ancient flows. These bricks are gray in color, and have been used extensively in the construction of buildings and particularly in sewer, manhole and fireplace work.

KAISER SEEKS SECRET OF A GRAVE

Shelling by the Germans of the Monastery of Mont des Cats, in Belgium, continues despite the kaiser's plea to the army commanders that the structure be spared. The request of the All Highest was purely personal and was based on the fear that the aged Prior of the monastery might be killed and with his death would go the secret of the burial place of Prince Maximilian of Hesse, the kaiser's nephew. In the whole incident rests one of the real stories of the war.

Back in 1914 Prince Max, then only twenty years old, was reported dead—slain by his own men. Investigation proved that he had been badly wounded and was being cared for by the Trappist Fathers in the Monastery des Cats. Then came a circumstantial story of his death and burial, it being said the kaiser's nephew lay in a grave with some of his own men and with three British officers.

Kaiser William wrote to the Pope asking his Holiness to request the Prior to return the prince's body to Germany that it might rest in the family crypt. The spirited Prior, though well along in years, said the prince's burial place only would be revealed when the Germans had left Belgium and had restored its shattered churches. There the matter rested until the Flanders advance this year, when the monastery again came until the German fire.

Prince Maximilian was the son of the Princess Marguerite, the kaiser's sister.

AN ORDER HARD TO OBEY

So great is the power of gravitation that man is practically a prisoner upon the earth's surface, even the aviator who temporarily escapes to a height of 20,000 feet or more. Yet a human being might leave it forever, if he made his departure at sufficient speed to overcome the weight of the ball upon which we live, 7,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons.

The muzzle velocity of a shell from the most powerful cannon is about 3,000 feet per second, but this projectile will fall to the ground after traversing a few miles, so its speed would have to be greatly exceeded by the individual desiring to penetrate into space.

If a projectile could be fired at a rate of 26,000 feet per second, writes Charles Nevers Holmes in Popular Science Monthly, it would probably never fall to the surface. Its rate of motion would just equal the terrestrial attraction, so it would become a satellite, always revolving about the earth.

When science makes possible an initial velocity of 37,000 feet a second, about seven miles, then a projectile may be started on a journey from which it might never return. This tremendous speed should enable it to burst through the attraction of our planet. The fact that it will not return would doubtless dampen the ardor of an adventurous passenger.

AVIATION LEADS IN QUEER INVENTIONS

Records and models in the Patent Office at Washington afford an interesting study of the possibilities of the human imagination, but it is probable that for remarkable conceptions the field of aviation leads all the rest. Patents have been granted for a flying machine propelled by nitroglycerine, another in which dynamite was to be the motive power, while a third was to be kept in the air by means of "reciprocating parachutes."

The latter, exclusive rights for which were awarded in 1897, was the invention of Henry Heintz of Elkton, S. D. He proposed to carry on both freight and passenger business with his airship, which was to be a big car with doors and windows, containing an engine room, quarters for the crew, a pilot-house for the skipper and all the comforts of home for the passengers. A "cigar-shaped balloon" surmounted the car, but the really novel feature was the "reciprocating parachute" arrangement. A steam engine was to operate these parachutes, which, by working up and down and suddenly expanding, were to obtain a grip on the atmosphere that would pull the car right up "by its bootstraps," so to speak.

The parachutes were simply for raising purposes and ordinary propellers were to be used to drive the car ahead. On paper, this plan appears quite feasible, although it is not recorded that the Heintz trans-continental airship line was ever actually put into operation. Moreover, the Heintz car would appear to be much safer than those, for instance, patented by S. B. Battery, of New York, and Edwin Pynchon of Chicago, as the metropolitan inventor proposed to derive his motive power from nitro-glycerine, while the Windy City man specified dynamite.

GAINED 25 POUNDS IN 2 MONTHS

SINCE QUITTING

TOBACCO HABIT

SUCCESSFUL CONQUEROR ATTAINED AT LAST!

HJALMAR NELSON, (address on application,) whose photo appears at the left, learned of a book and other information being given FREE, explaining how Tobacco Habit can be conquered by oneself, safely, speedily and completely. He obtained the information and is now able to report a gain of 25 pounds in weight (from 163 to 188 pounds), as well as

A THREE DAYS' VICTORY OVER SLAVERY TO TOBACCO HABIT

HERE are more letters—voluntary testimonials. Though they are a small fraction of the thousands and thousands that can be produced, they are sufficient to show you what may be expected after the Tobacco Habit is overcome within 72 hours, by the simple Woods Method:

"**While addicted to the tobacco habit,** every muscle and joint ached, and I had almost given up business. I was poor in health, weighing about 130 pounds. Now I am well, weigh 165 pounds, and can work every day. I have never wanted to chew or smoke since following the Woods method."—A. F. Shelton, (No. 199600), Pittsylvania Co., Va. (Full address on application.)

"I have no craving for tobacco; this I consider wonderful after having used a pipe for 35 years. I have gained 12 pounds in two months, which is very good at the age of 59 years. To say that the benefits far exceed my expectations, is putting it mildly. Anyone in doubt can refer to me." John Brodie, (No. 153235), Wapello Co., Iowa. (Full address on application.)

"I had weighed as low as 128 pounds, never got over 135 while I used tobacco. Now I weigh 156 pounds. Everyone wants to know why I got so fleshy; I tell them to follow Edward J. Woods' method for overcoming tobacco and find out."—W. S. Morgan, (No. 11815 K), Cooke Co., Tex. (Full address on application.)

"I smoked for more than 20 years, but now I am proud to say that for the past nine months I have no craze for smoking; I feel better and am gaining in weight every month since I stopped."—William Crawford, (No. 206737), Philadelphia Co., Penna. (Full address on application.)

"May God bless you. I am feeling finer every day of my life—not like the same person. My appetite is better, and my stomach is all right. I can hold out in walking better, my voice is better and my heart is stronger."—Mrs. Mattie E. Stevenson, (No. 230738), St. John Co., Fla. (Full address on application.)

"Have used tobacco in all forms (mostly chewing) for 15 years, using about a plug of tobacco a day. I began following your Method on a Friday noon and after that day the craving for tobacco was gone. I am always ready to praise you and the good work you are doing. I can also say that I have gained nine pounds in seven weeks, and feel like a new man."—Robert S. Brown, (No. 229832), Worcester Co., Mass. (Full address on application.)

"My husband hasn't smoked a single cigarette, and has no desire to smoke since following your method of quitting. He looks like a new man—the best I ever saw him. He gained seventeen pounds, and is feeling fine." Mrs. Carl C. Rogers, (No. 224390), Iredell Co., North Carolina. (Full address on application.)

"I was using about one pound and a half of chewing tobacco a week, but since quitting through your system, I have gained about 15 pounds, and have better health by far, than before."—W. S. Powell, (No. 139149), Harper Co., Okla. (Full address on application.)

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO QUIT TOBACCO QUICKLY AND EASILY AND ENJOY YOURSELF A THOUSAND TIMES BETTER WHILE IN ROBUST HEALTH?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE

Why continue to commit slow suicide, when you can live a really contented life, if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid oneself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will power"—don't do it. The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures the health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach, constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco or snuff.

FREE

Here is an opportunity to receive FREE a carefully compiled treatise on the subject, containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the renowned Three Days' Method by which Mr. Nelson, and thousands and thousands of others, saved themselves from the life-wrecking tobacco habit. Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed FREE TO YOU in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is merely REQUEST IT. A postcard will do. Address

"I sleep well and have no more restless or nervous feeling. I am past seventy eight years of age, and feel fine since adopting the Woods Method."

—John P. Montet (Photo above) Civil War Veteran

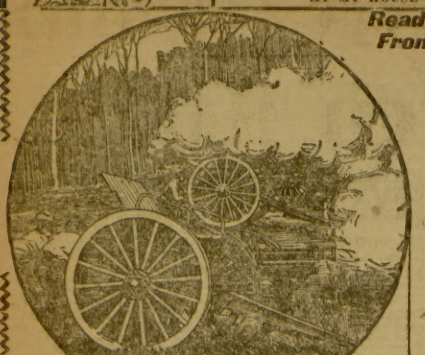
(Full address on application.)

Edward J. Woods, WC-101, Station F, New York, N.Y.

COME TO THE

"MOVIES"

AT MY HOUSE—TO-NIGHT



REAL MOVING PICTURES

A Real Moving Picture Show In Your Own Home

Remember, this is a Genuine Moving Picture Machine and the motion pictures are clear, sharp and distinct.

The Moving Picture Machine is finely constructed, and carefully put together by skilled workmen. It is made of Russian Metal, has a beautiful finish, and is operated by a finely constructed mechanism, consisting of an eight wheel movement, etc. The projecting lenses are carefully ground and adjusted, triple polished, standard double extra reflector, throwing a ray of light many feet, and enlarging the picture on the screen up to three or four feet in area. The light is produced by a safety carbide generator, such as is used on the largest automobiles. This throws a dazzling white light of 500 candle-power on the screen.

It is not a toy; it is a solidly constructed and durable Moving Picture Machine. The mechanism is exceedingly simple and is readily operated by the most inexperienced. The pictures shown by this marvelous Moving Picture Machine are not the common, crude and lifeless Magic Lantern variety, but are life-like photographic reproductions of actual scenes, places and people, which never tire its audiences. This Moving Picture Machine has caused a rousing enthusiasm wherever it is used.

This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Moving Pictures as are shown at any regular Moving Picture show. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below, which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

How You Can Get This Great Moving Picture Machine—Read My Wonderful Offer to You

HERE IS what you are to do in order to get this amazing Moving Picture Machine and the real Moving Pictures. Send your name and address—that is all. Write name and address very plainly. Mail to-day. As soon as I receive it I will mail you 20 of the most beautiful premium pictures you ever saw—all brilliant and shimmering colors. These pictures are printed in many colors and among the titles are such subjects as *"Betsy Ross Making the First American Flag"*—*"Washington at Home,"*—*"Battle of Lake Erie,"* etc. I want you to distribute these premium pictures on a special 30-cent offer among the people you know. When you have distributed the 20 premium pictures on my liberal offer you will have collected $6.00. Send the $6.00 to me and I will immediately send you FREE the Moving Picture Machine with complete Outfit and the Box of Film.

50,000 of these machines have made 50,000 boys happy. Answer at once. Be the first in your town to get one.

M. CROFTON, Secy.,
615 W. 43d Street, Dept. 14, New York

PLEASE USE COUPON

Read These Letters From Happy Boys:

Shows Clear Pictures

I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

Sold His for $10.00 and Ordered Another

Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for $10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Mandan, N. Dak.

Would Not Give Away for $25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for $25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Breaky, Jeansville, Pa. Box 34.

Better Than a $12.00 Machine

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a $12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Ellseberry, care of Revolution Store, Greenboro, N. C.

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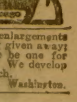

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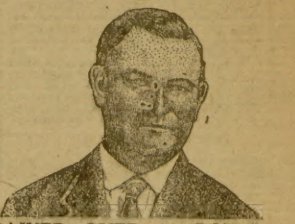

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